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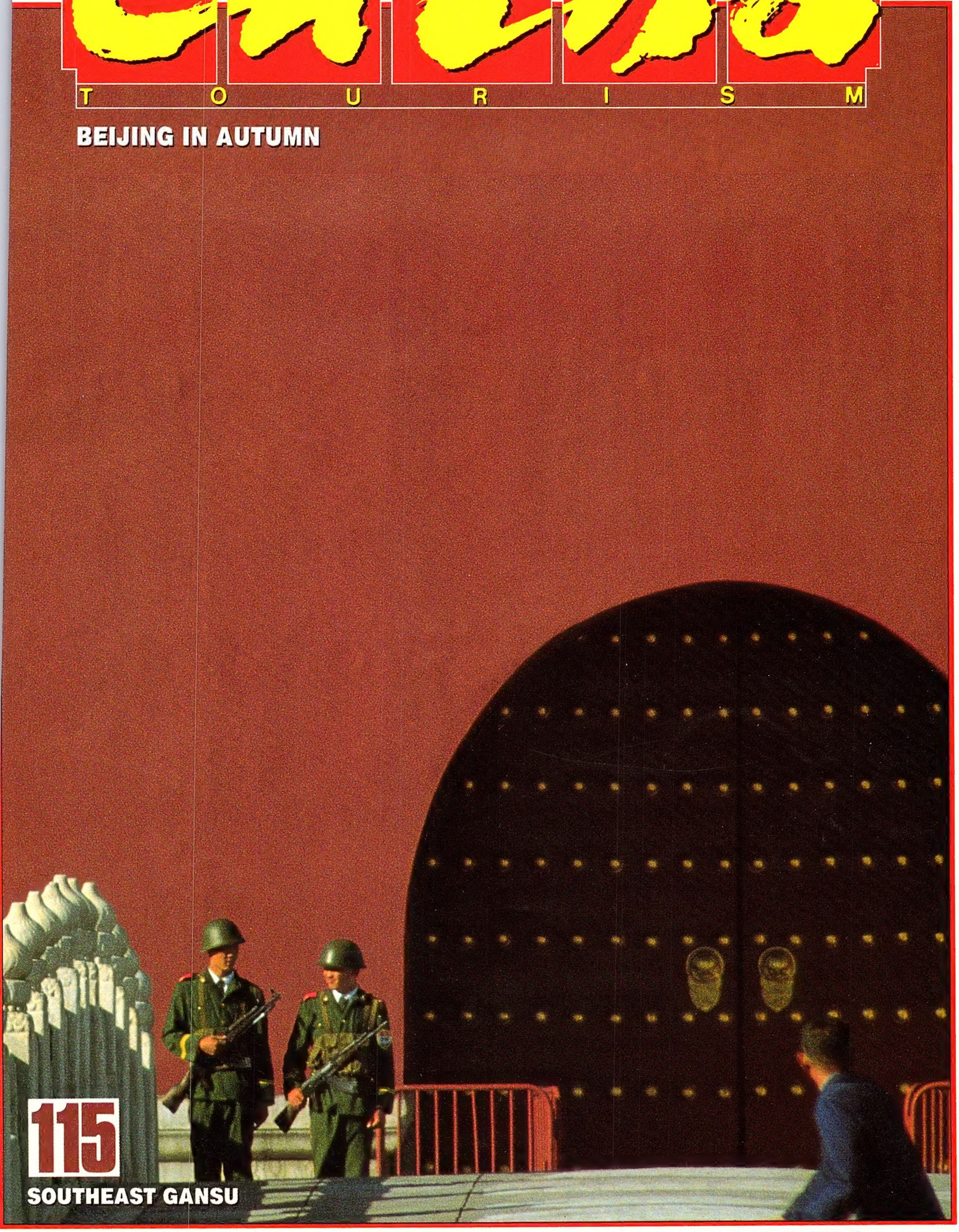

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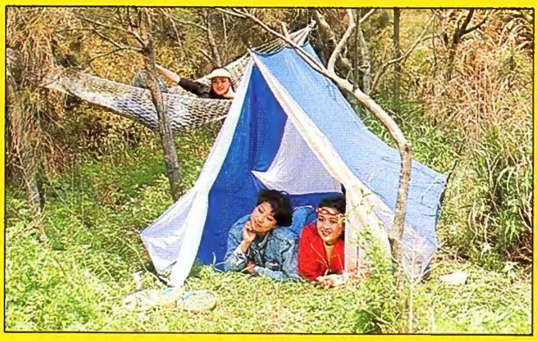

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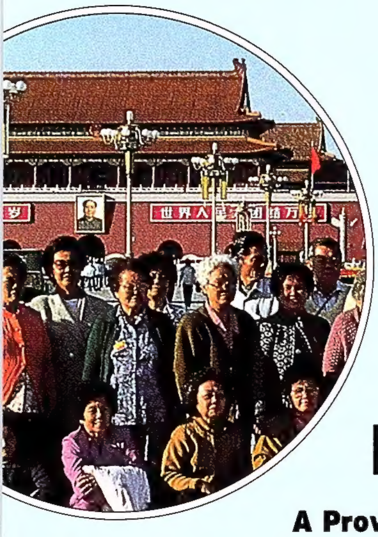

EDITORIAL

A Province of Inexhaustible Interest

The Chinese year of the Snake is about to glide off and make way for the more rumbustious Year of the Horse. We take this opportunity to wish all our readers a year full of the horse's spirit of vigour and vitality.

That time of year when the golden autumn fades into winter is generally considered the best season for a visit to Beijing. However, the events of last year in the Chinese capital have caused a certain loss of interest and even reluctance on the part of many potential visitors. As we believe there may be readers who would like to know what the city is like now and see more scenes of everyday life as it continues for Beijingers, we include in this issue a special Photo Focus on Beijing as it was in the late autumn of 1989.

But our major theme this month is Gansu. Situated in the heart of northern China, Gansu was where in ancient times the culture of the Central Plains met that of the Western Regions (peresent-day Xinjiang and parts of Central Asia). Despite having devoted several issues plus countless individual articles to Gansu Province in the past, we have by no means exhausted its wealth of possibilities for the visitor.

This issue introduces the southern and eastern parts of Gansu, still little known to foreign travellers. We report on their peoples, customs, landforms and cultural relics, in particular the string of Northern Wei cave-temples in eastern Gansu dating from the fifth and sixth centuries. Our reporter Wong Chung Fai found significant differences between these two areas, as well as between them and the rest of Gansu, especially in relation to the better-known Gansu Corridor.

One more point: with this issue the price of CHINA TOURISM has increased in line with rising costs. This is regrettable, but unfortunately necessary. Our apologies!

Mysterious Black Pottery Masks of Yunnan
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Southeast Gansu
A Canal Two Thousand Years Old
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共和

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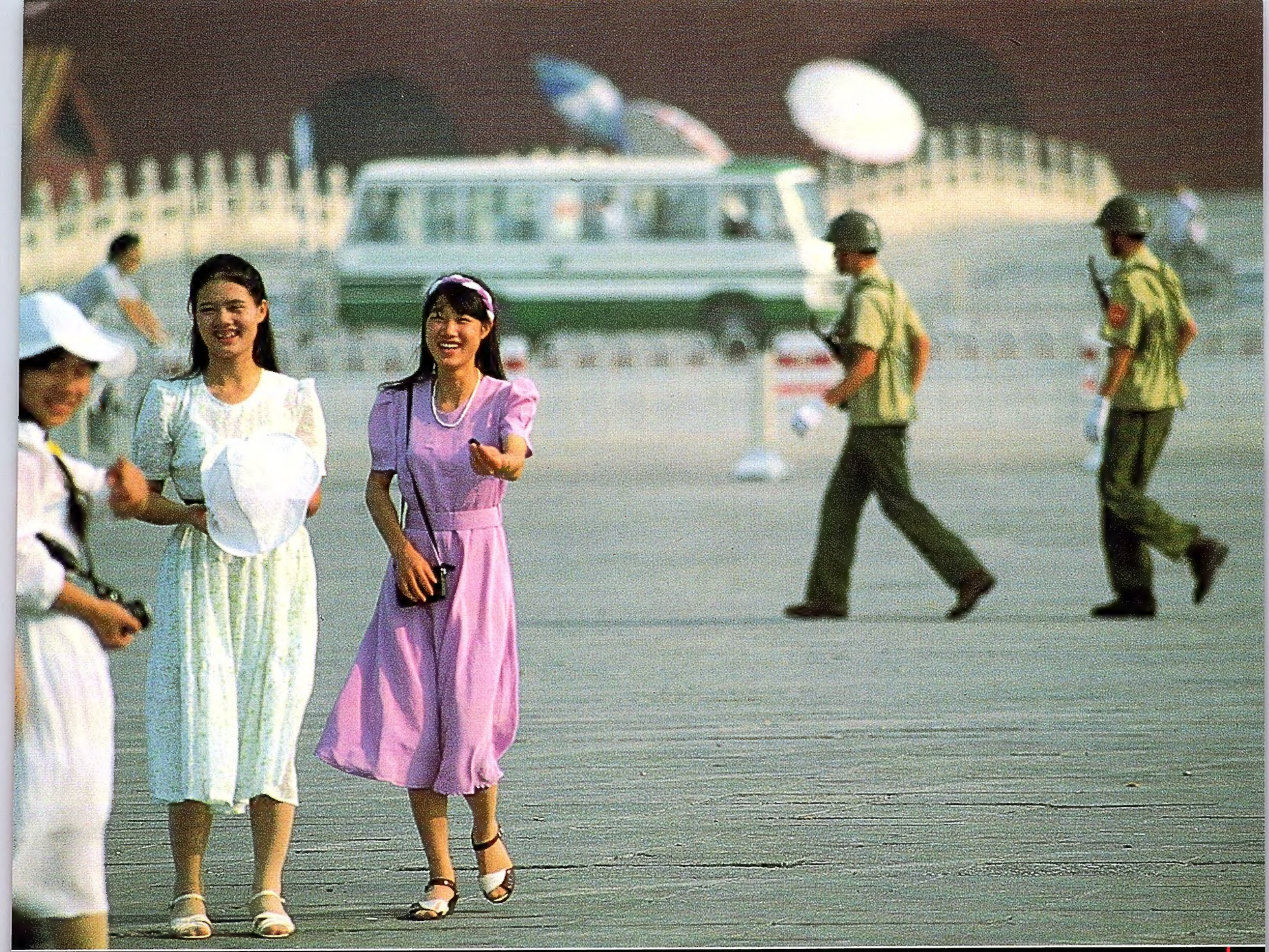
Beijing in Autumn

TEXT BY HE FENG

Beijing's autumn, though short, is probably the best time of year for a visit. Accordingly, after some hesitation, we decided to return to take another look at China's capital. Our main concern was to see whether and to what extent the atmosphere in the city had changed after my last autumn visit. The following are just some of our photographers' impressions as they strolled through the familiar streets.

人民共和国万岁
世界人民大团结万岁



Beijing is still under military law and the military are much in evidence, but that does not seem to affect the cheery mood of these prettily dressed Chinese holiday-makers.
(Photo by Wang Wenlan)

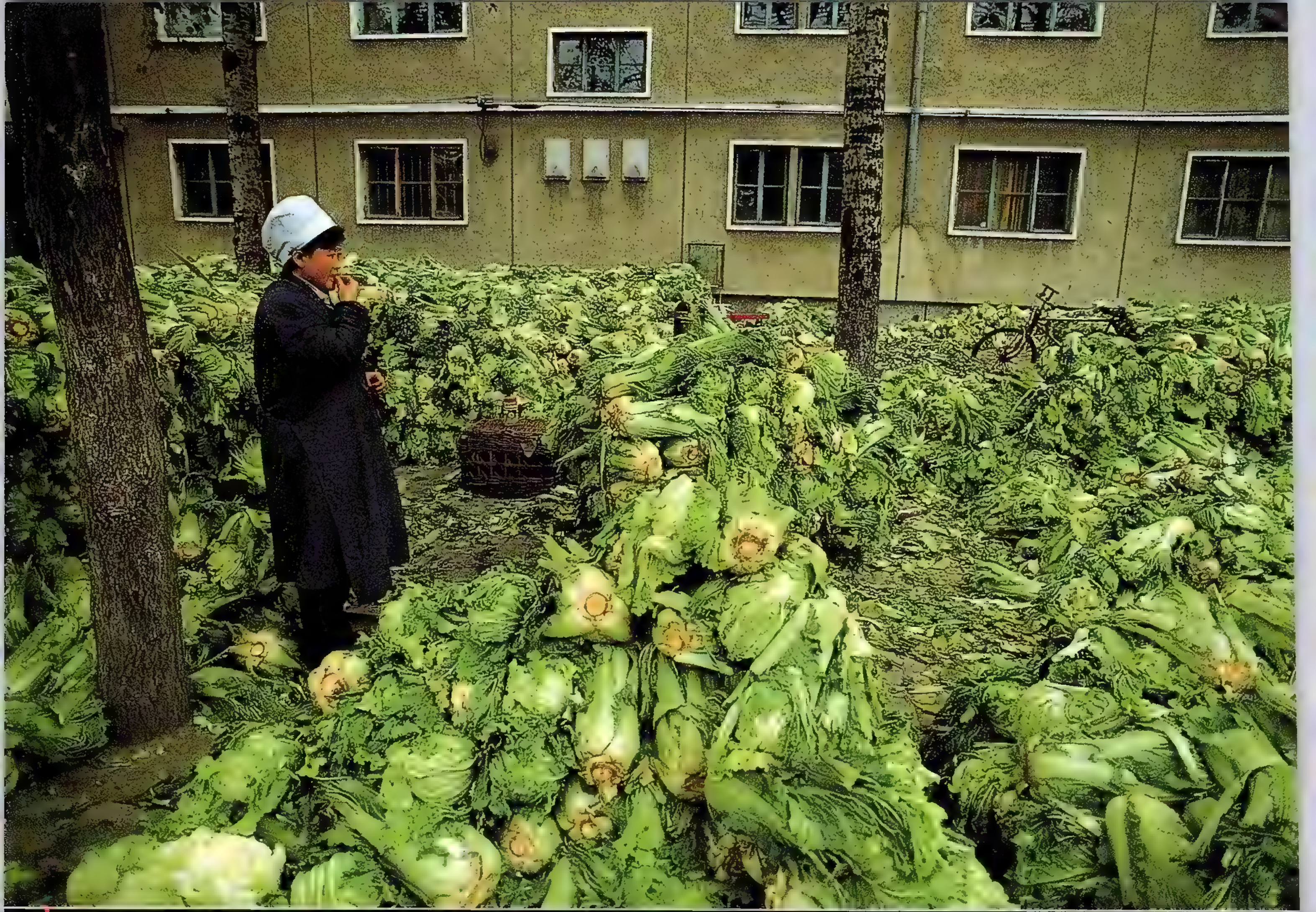
Previous page: Behind Jinshuiqiao, the Bridge of Golden Water, opposite Tian'anmen Square, the doors of Tian'anmen Gate – the main entrance to the Forbidden City, now the Palace Museum – are firmly closed.
(Photo by Chen Jianbang)

Currently off limits except by special arrangement or to those holding a travel certificate, Tian'anmen Square – often called the heart of the city and thus of the nation – is uncharacteristically empty. This tour group from Taiwan can take their pick of places in which to pose.
(Photo by Chen Jianbang)

Pyrotechnics light up the night sky above Tian'anmen Square in a blaze of colour for the National Day celebrations at the beginning of October, but the crowd – limited to special invitees – is perceptibly thinner than in previous years.
(Photo by Guo Jianshe)

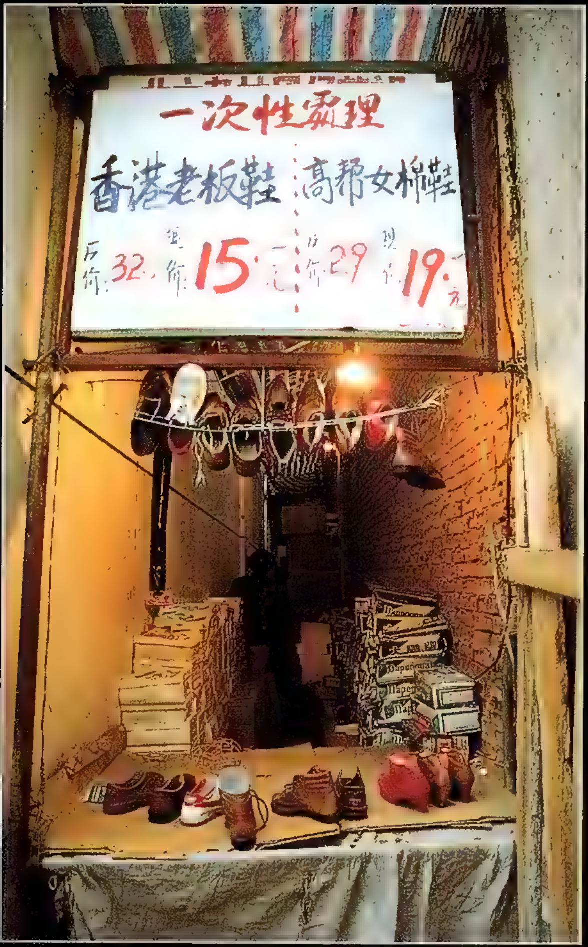
The Summer Palace west of Beijing has seldom seen anything quite like this as young foreign tourists cavort at the entrance of Tingliguan (Listening to Orioles Singing) Hall in traditional Beijing Opera costume. One of the undoubted advantages of visiting the capital at present is that one is a rare, and thus doubly honoured, guest.

(Photo by Guo Jianshe)



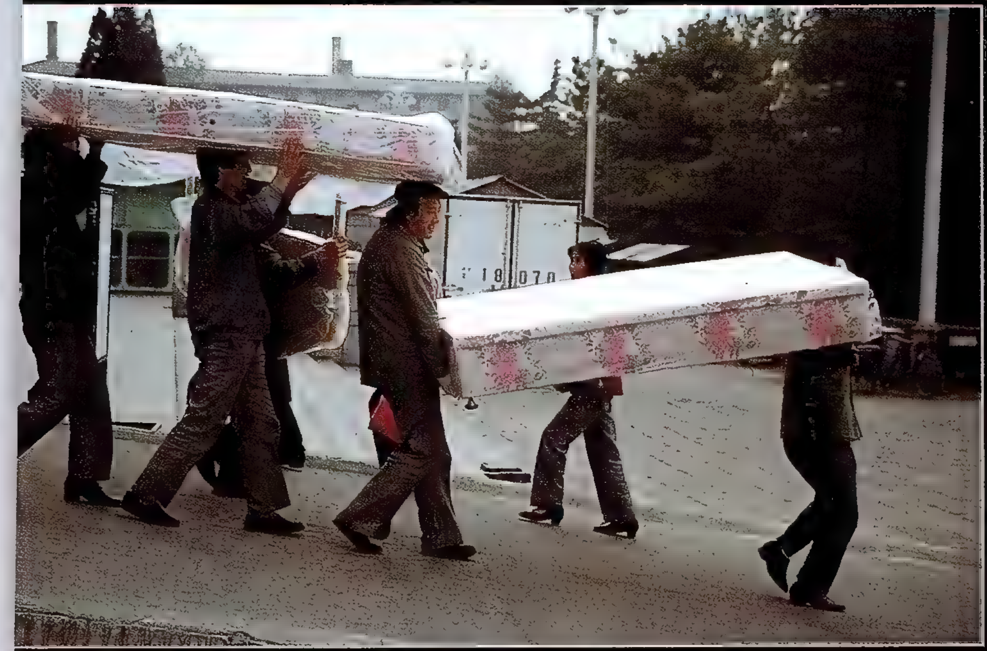
In response to last year's shortages and consequent panic buying of cabbages – the traditional winter vegetable for Beijing families, who normally store them in large quantities to tide themselves over the winter – farmers were encouraged to grow more this year. The result – a glut. The problem has been compounded by the fact that people can now buy a wider range of vegetables from private market gardeners. Every household has been urged to buy a certain amount as a civic duty to prevent the cabbages from rotting on the streets, but citizens have so far shown themselves to be less than enthusiastic.

(Photo by Ren Chenming)



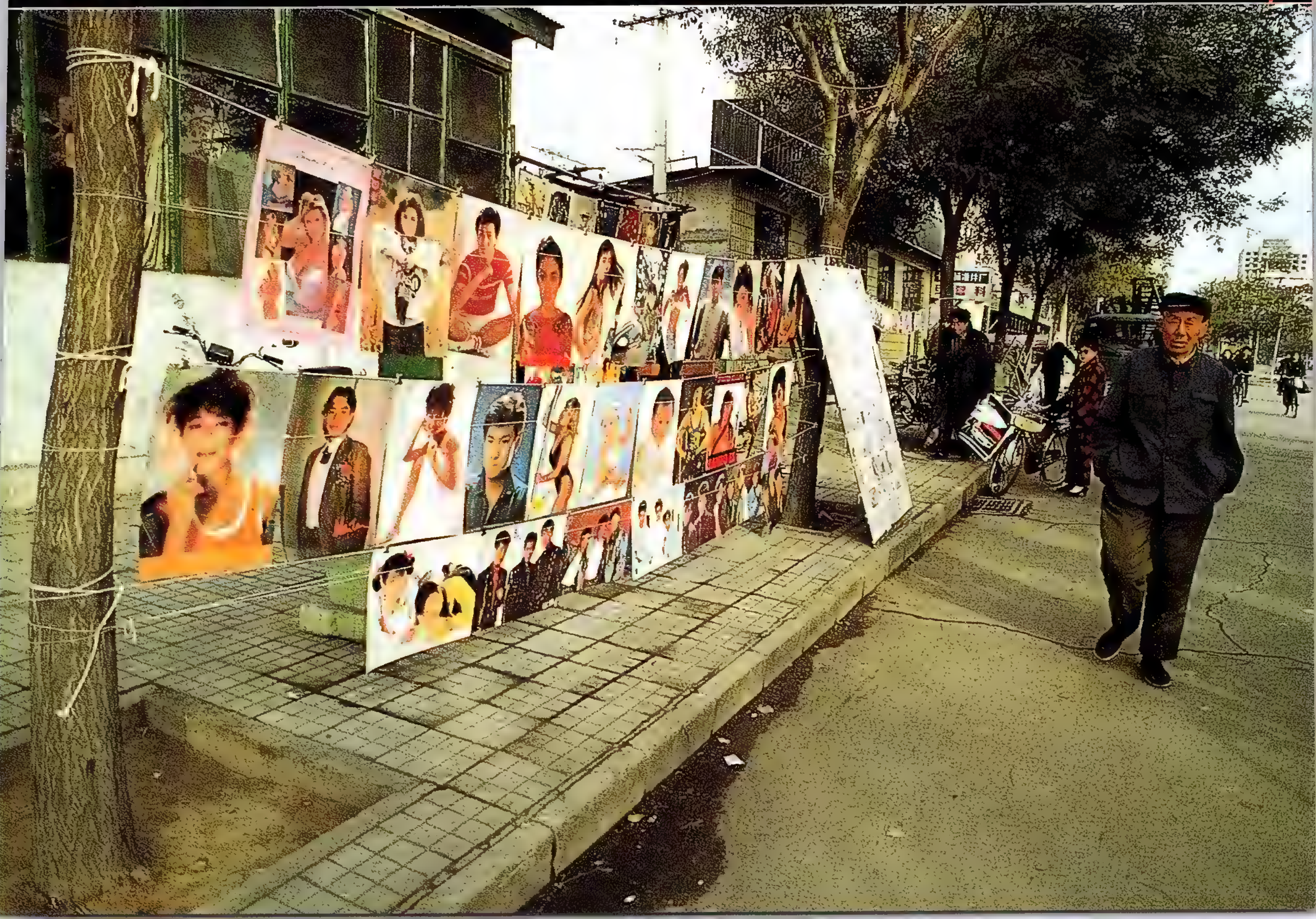
This small shop is offering a one-off opportunity to purchase men's shoes supposedly 'made in Hong Kong' and high-quality padded shoes for women in a clearance sale. Last chance now, come and buy!

(Photo by Ren Chenming)

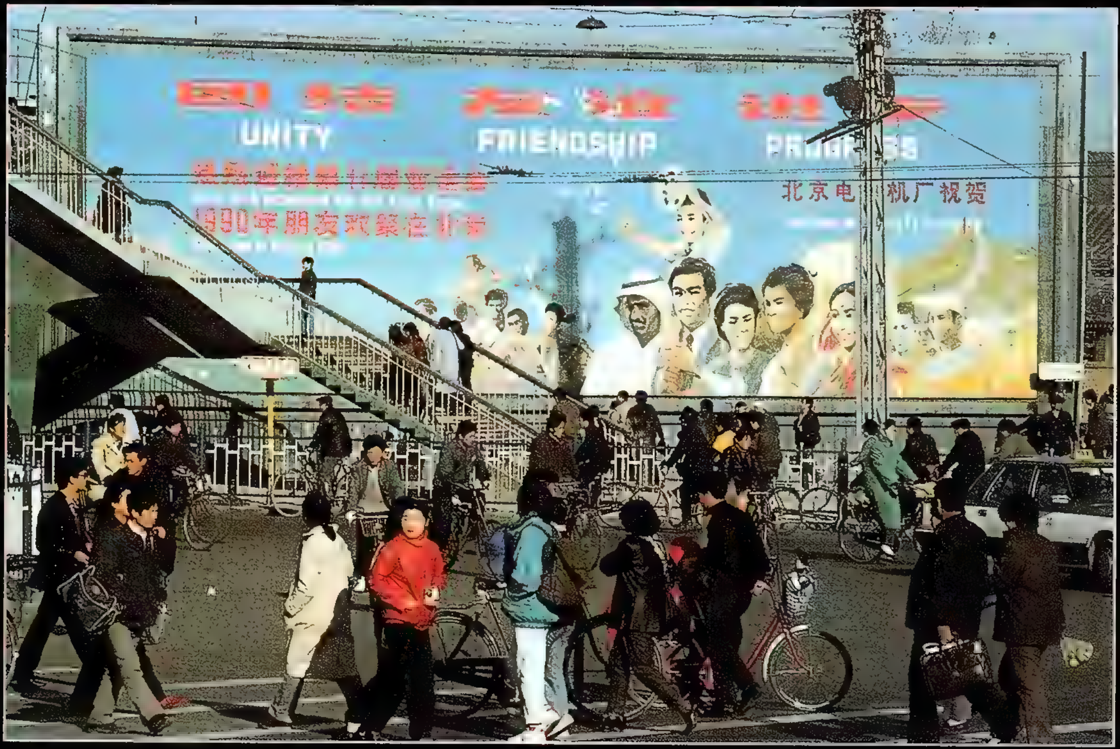


A family happily grapples with their unwieldy burdens – the components of what will undoubtedly become an heirloom! Such an interior-sprung divan bed is a rare luxury in China.
(Photo by Ren Chenming)

Hard to believe this is Beijing and not Hong Kong.... A hawker sells posters of popular singers and movie stars from Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan. There is even a scattering of Western stars in his collection, including the ubiquitous Sylvester Stallone as Rambo!
(Photo by Wang Wenlan)



The autumn breeze plays with the heavy flags put up for the festivities, lifting them to reveal sightseers and policemen milling on the Bridge of Golden Water.
(Photo by Guo Jianshe)



Beijingers are so used to this sort of placard advertising the Asian Games, scheduled to ta place in their city, that they no longer pay it the slightest atter Only the outsider is left to speculate on the progress of preparations and the prospect the games.
(Photo by Guo Jianshe)

A picture which sums up the tourist situation in the Chinese capital thi autumn of 1989. A rare and wondrous spectacle – the Great Wall north o Beijing at Badaling almost as deserted as the wilderness on either side The few visitors have no need to contend with the usual multitudes or queue to climb the steps as they make their leisurely way along what has become a symbol of the Chinese nation
(Photo by Guo Jianshe

As the weakening autumn sun reaches the Taoranting (Joyous Pavilion) Park in southwest Beijing, eager fishermen already have their rods baited and in position at the lakeside. The possibility of a catch is more important to them than anything else in the world, and they are prepared to wait patiently until they are successful.
(Photo by Guo Jianshe)

Translated by M.K.

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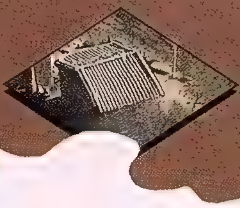
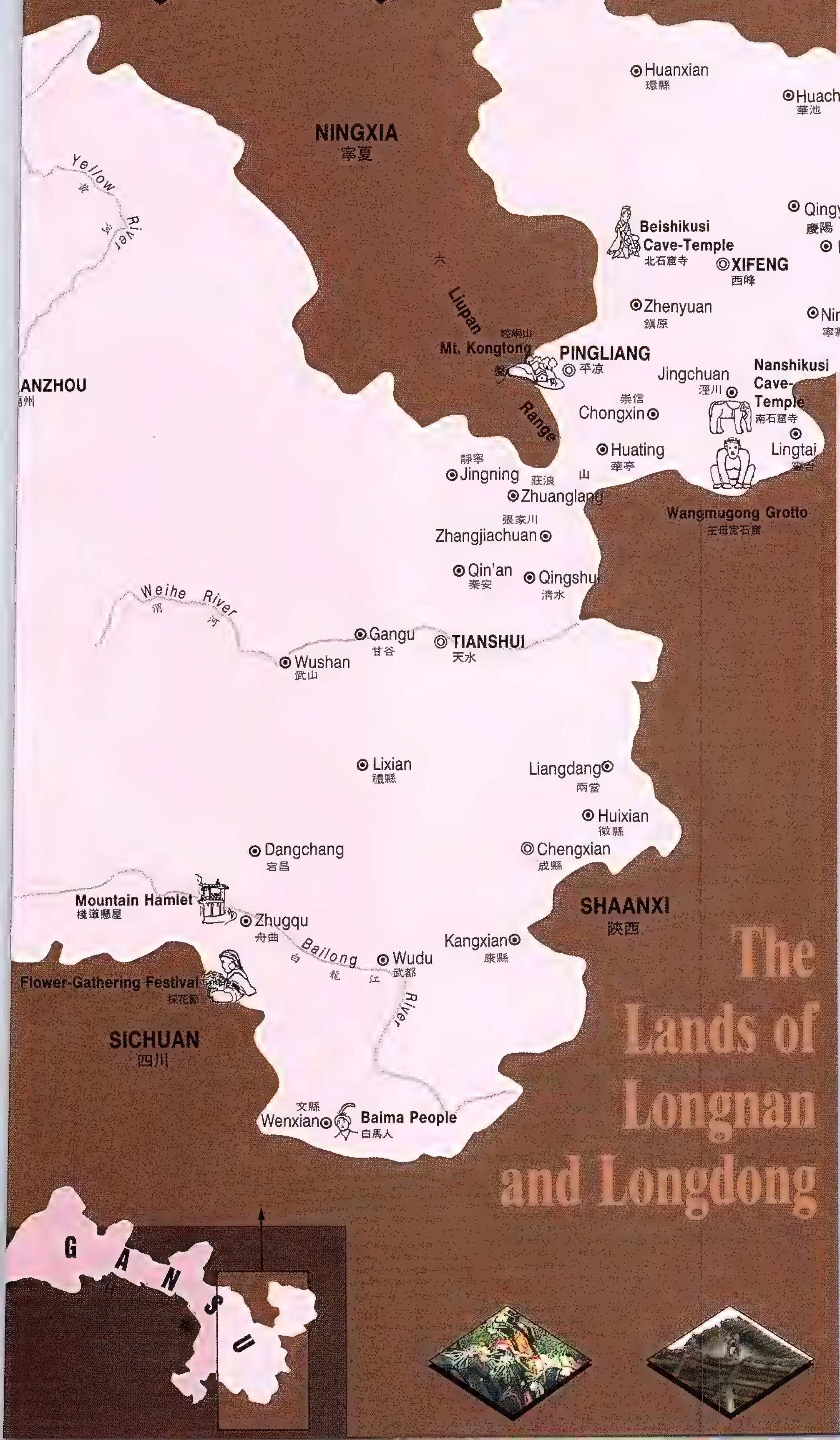




The Lands of Longnan and Longdong

On the purely administrative level, Gansu Province is divided up into seven districts (from the west: Jiuquan, Zhangye, Wuwei, Dingxi, Longnan, Pingliang and Qingyang), five cities of equivalent status (Lanzhou, Tianshui, Jinchang, Jiayuguan and Baiyin), and two autonomous prefectures (Gannan Tibetan and Linxia Hui).

Longnan or southern Gansu has an area of 28,000 square kilometres and is subdivided into nine counties: Chengxian, Wudu, Xihe, Lixian, Dangchang, Kangxiang, Wenxian, Liangdang and Huixian. But generally, when people talk about 'Longnan', they mean southern Gansu in a much broader geographical sense which thus includes some of the counties of the Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

This is a mountainous region; major ranges include the Dieshan and Minshan Mountains. It is warmer than other parts of the province and it abounds in evergreens and deciduous trees. Some of the river valleys receive plenty of rain, which permits the growing of rice and even subtropical crops.

Consisting of the districts of Pingliang and Qingyang and with an area of 24,000 square kilometres, Longdong or eastern Gansu belongs properly to China's loess plateau. The loess deposits may be over thirty metres deep in places. As such, it shares the common heritage of loess areas of Shanxi, Shaanxi and Henan.

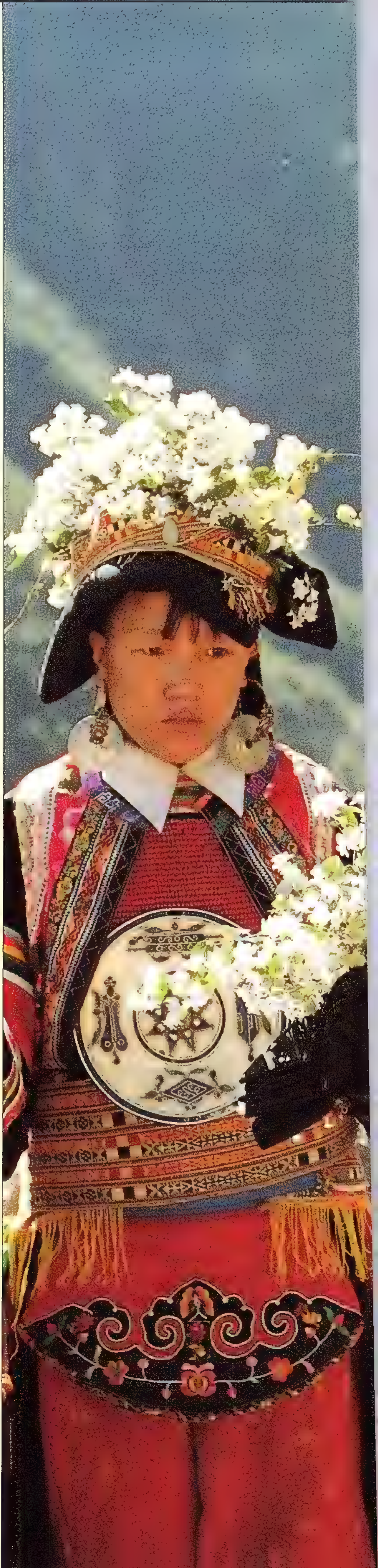
Even though the rainfall and frost period of southern and eastern Gansu are similar, the latter has less vegetation as a result of the heavy soil erosion common in loess terrain. But pockets of greenery and woodlands can be found in sheltered gullies.

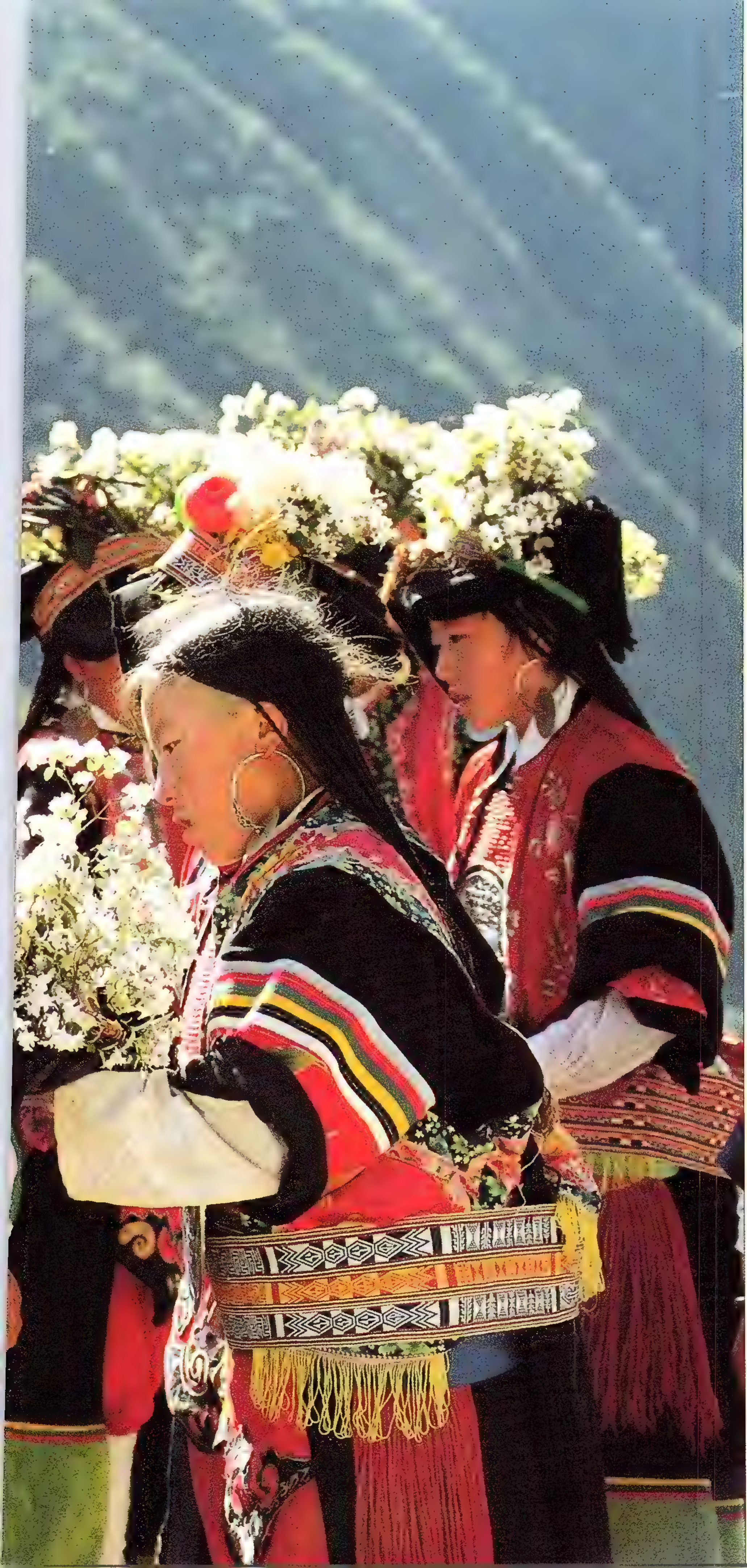
Translated by M.K.

SOUTHEAST GANSU

Flower-Gathering Festival at Boyu

ARTICLE BY CHEN YUNGUANG & ZHANG HEPING





For much of China, the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar is Duanwu (Double Five), better known to foreigners as the Dragon Boat Festival. For Han Chinese this honours the memory of the poet Qu Yuan of the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.) and also seems to be connected with ancient dragon worship. But for the Tibetans of Boyu, a village in Zhugqu County in Gansu's Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, it is the date of their Flower-Gathering Festival. Also known as 'Daughters Day', this festival at around the time of the summer solstice is unique to this one small area. This year it took place on June 8; the next festival will be on June 27 1990.

Boyu girls dress in their very best finery for this summertime festival (by Kang Xiyu)

1

Preparations for the event begin on the previous day. Very early in the morning, with baskets of provisions on their backs, a fowling-piece or sabre in hand, the young men and women of the village dressed in their very best set off in groups up the slopes of the 3,000-metre mountain. They believe that if they drink the spring water on the mountain before the sun touches it, in other words, before dawn, it will keep them free from disease. And if they bathe in the water, all evil will be kept from them.

Boyu is located at the heart of a complex of high peaks and deep ravines, and the paths along which they climb lead through magnificent scenery at this time of year. The mountain slopes are green with bushes and shrubs and dotted with all kinds of flowers: azaleas, camellias, peonies, wolfberries....

As they climb, the girls sing folksongs such as *Up in the Mountain*. They make circlets of flowers or entwine branches and fix them in their headdress. Even the boys put flowers in their hair. As they wend their way through the thick vegetation, they become one with it.

In Honour of Lianzhi

Once on the mountain, the young people build a shelter and light a bonfire close by. At dusk, they gather for supper around the fire. Singing and dancing are of course indispensable on any such occasion, but even more important is the ritual to worship Lianzhi, the Goddess of Flowers. They transform a table into an altar and burn joss-sticks as they pray, asking her to protect the village, to give them a good harvest and to multiply their livestock.

One of their legends relates that the Tibetans of Boyu lived in abject poverty in ancient times. Touched by their misery, the gods eventually took pity and sent a young girl, Lianzhi, from heaven to teach them how to reclaim land and grow crops, how to spin and weave cloth. When a natural disaster struck the village, she it was who dug up wild plants to feed the villagers and gathered medicinal herbs from the slopes to heal them. This went on until one year, on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, she went into the mountains to gather flowers as so often before... and never came back. It is said that a strong gust of wind blew her off a cliff to her death. The local people started to make offerings to her and named her their 'Goddess of Flowers'. And the day on which she disappeared became their Flower-Gathering Festival.

After the night in the open on the mountainside, the youngsters clamber back down. Half-way down the mountain they are met by a group of elderly villagers and small children. The older women present the girls

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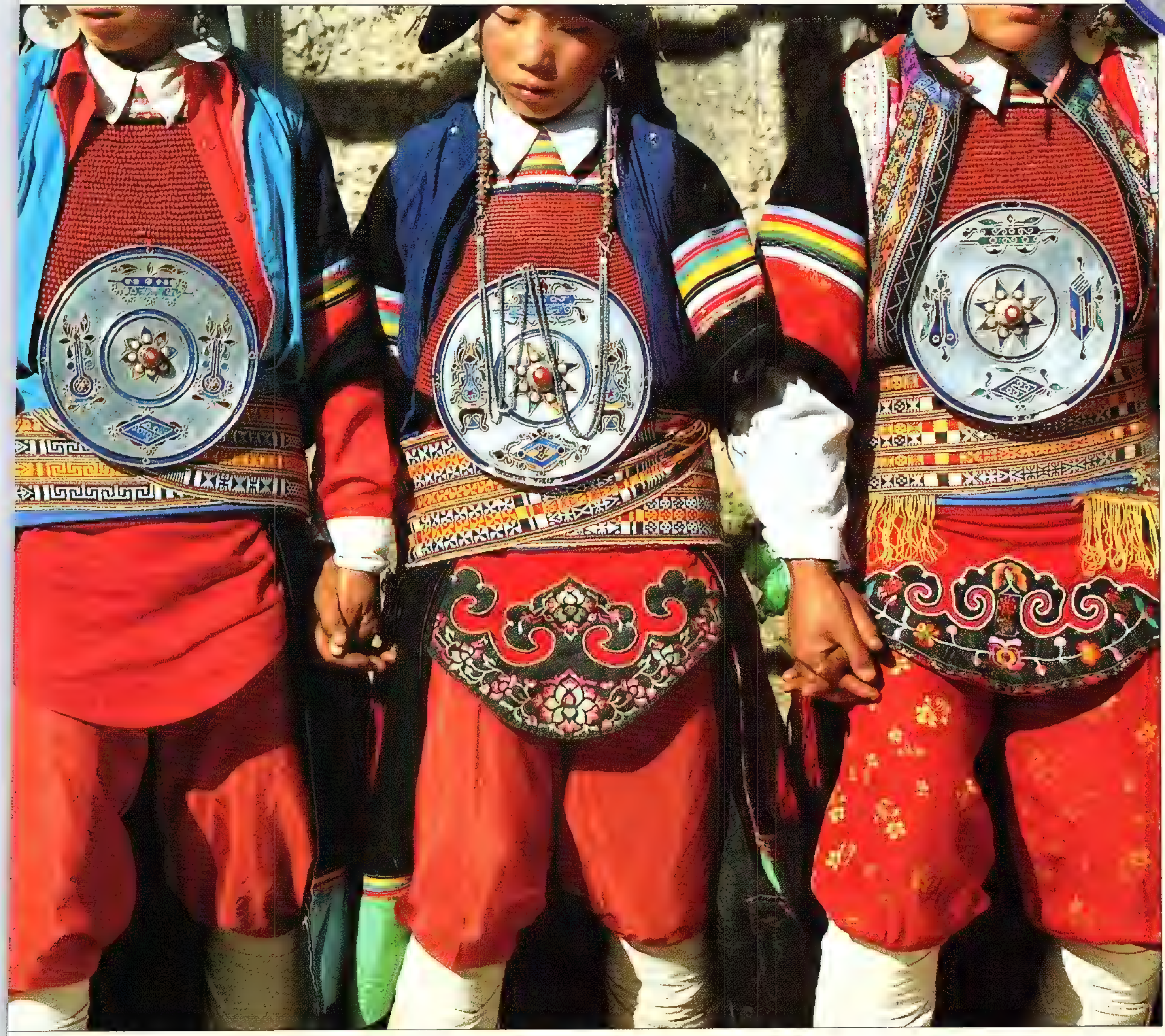
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with large bowls of barley beer and urge them to drink, then escort the flower-gatherers back down to the village. Here, flowers are first offered to childless older couples since the latter have no progeny of their own to wish them happiness and good health.

Dances and Rituals

At ten o'clock that morning, people swarm to the threshing ground and pile up the flowered branches brought down from the

Back down from the mountain with their flowery booty (1, by Kang Xiyu, and 4, by Zhang Chaoyin). Boyu after the harvest (2, by Wang Jie). The girls' costume is thought to be based on that of the warriors of ancient Tubo (3, also by Kang Xiyu).

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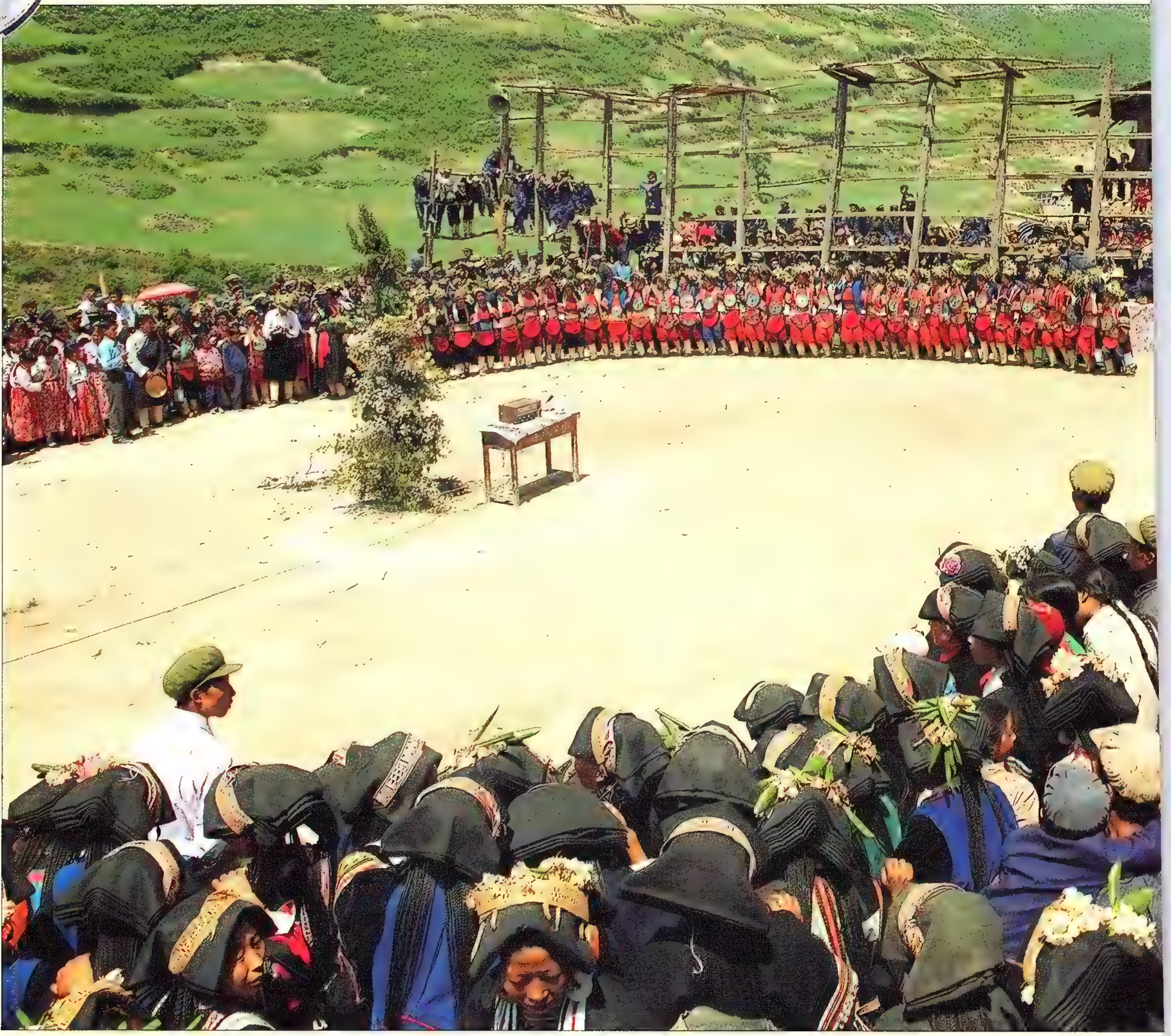

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mountain in the centre of the open space. One elderly man, obviously a sort of master of ceremonies, scatters flowers and barley grains in all directions while calling down blessings on the village.

Then, as three shots ring out, the most beautiful girl in the village begins to shake a set of bells and several hundred women and girls, hand in hand, sing and dance to the rhythm of her playing. This is called *zhurui* by the local people, meaning 'dance of joy'. The music is loud and clear; the dancers' movements are simple and neat. A couple of girls suddenly whirl out of the line, each holding a bowl of barley beer in both hands. Singing in glorification of drinking, they kneel in turn on one knee before the assembled guests and village elders and offer them the beer to drink.

According to custom, girls must change

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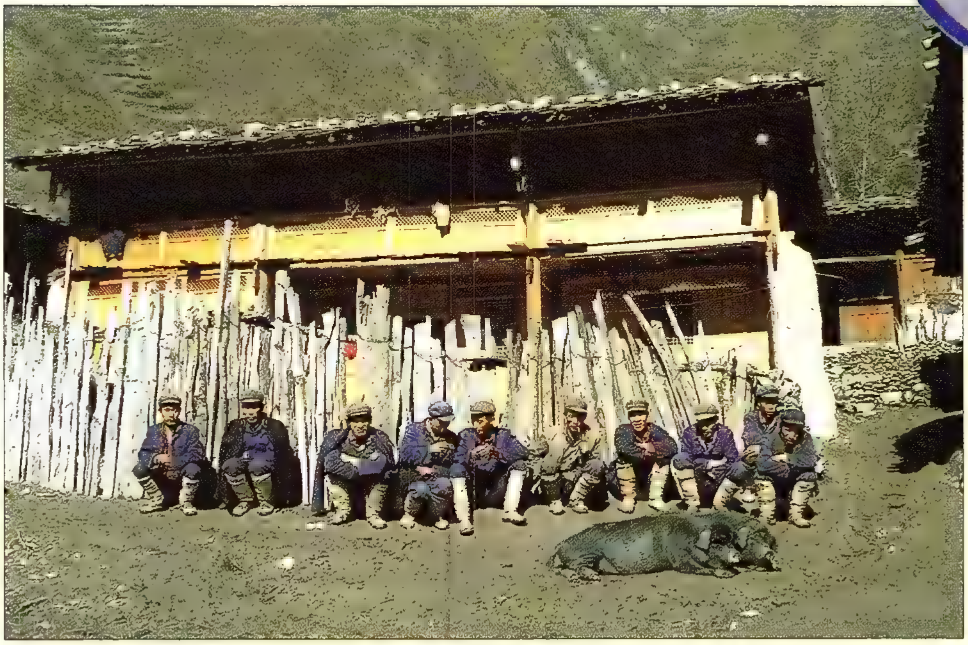
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their dress seven times on the day of the festival. One outfit is particularly striking and seems very different from other Tibetan female costumes. The skirt of the robe is tied back to reveal bright red or blue satin trousers drawn in at the ankle and a tiny decorative apron of the same colour. The robe is decorated with patches and strips of black, red, yellow and blue, often with added fringing and brocade. The broad belt is woven locally on a traditional loom in vivid geometric patterns.

But what really draws the eye is the 'breastplate' made of around five to six thousand coral beads, and the enormous silver medallion at waist level. Tibetans love jewellery, and it is nothing uncommon for the people of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau to wear fairly large bejewelled amulets. But these at Boyu — known as *meilong* — are truly enormous, something like thirty centimetres in diameter. The body of the medallion is scattered with motifs executed in coloured enamels, including Tibetan Buddhist symbols and talismans to ward off evil spirits. The central boss decorated with coral and pearls gives it even more the air of a warrior's shield.

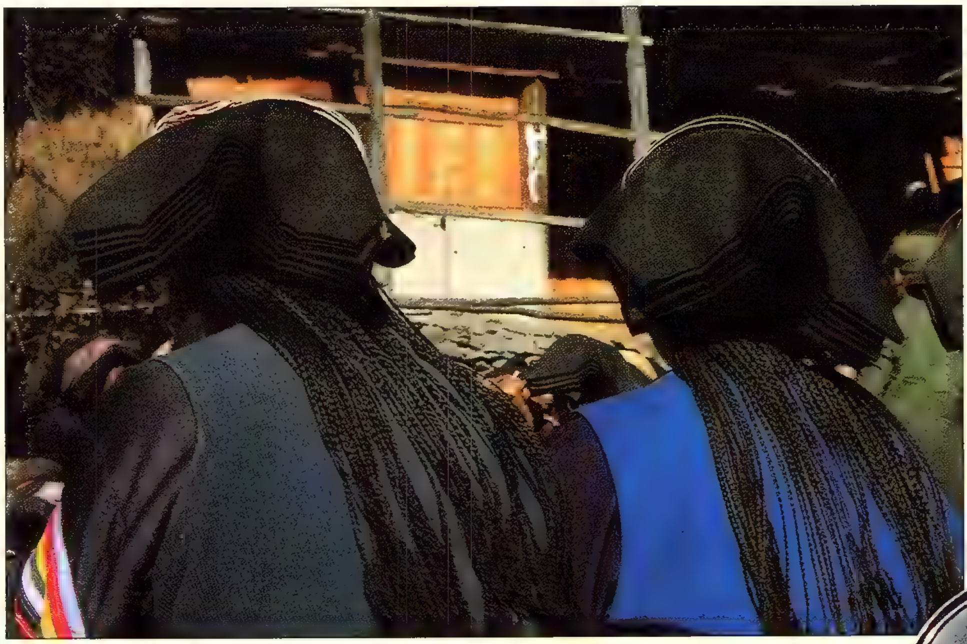
And in fact this garb is thought to be associated in some way with the army of Tubo, the Tibetan kingdom which was founded by Songtsan Gambo in 629 and lasted for around two hundred years. But how a warrior's uniform came to grace girls at a summer festival centuries later is anybody's guess.

Legend has it that the forebears of the Boyu Tibetans were soldiers from the hinterland of Tibet who were sent to guard the border areas. However, they began to farm the land and eventually decided to settle there. After centuries in this new homeland, their language and costume is now very different from Tibetans elsewhere.

The Boyu women's headgear is also rather elaborate. They usually use a length of black fabric folded six times, which is said to be as much as seven metres long when extended. Experts say that the way in which it is folded is very similar to the headdress of the women of the Qiang of northern Sichuan, another very ancient branch of the Tibetan nationality but acknowledged separately as one of China's minorities. ◻

Translated by Wang Mingjie

The villagers gather for dances and rituals (1, by Kang Xiyu) at the threshing ground, which looks rather different at harvest time (2, by Zhang Runguo). Boyu men favour the Han Chinese style of dress (3). The headdress tied with braid is made from a piece of fabric seven metres long (4) (last two by Wang Jie).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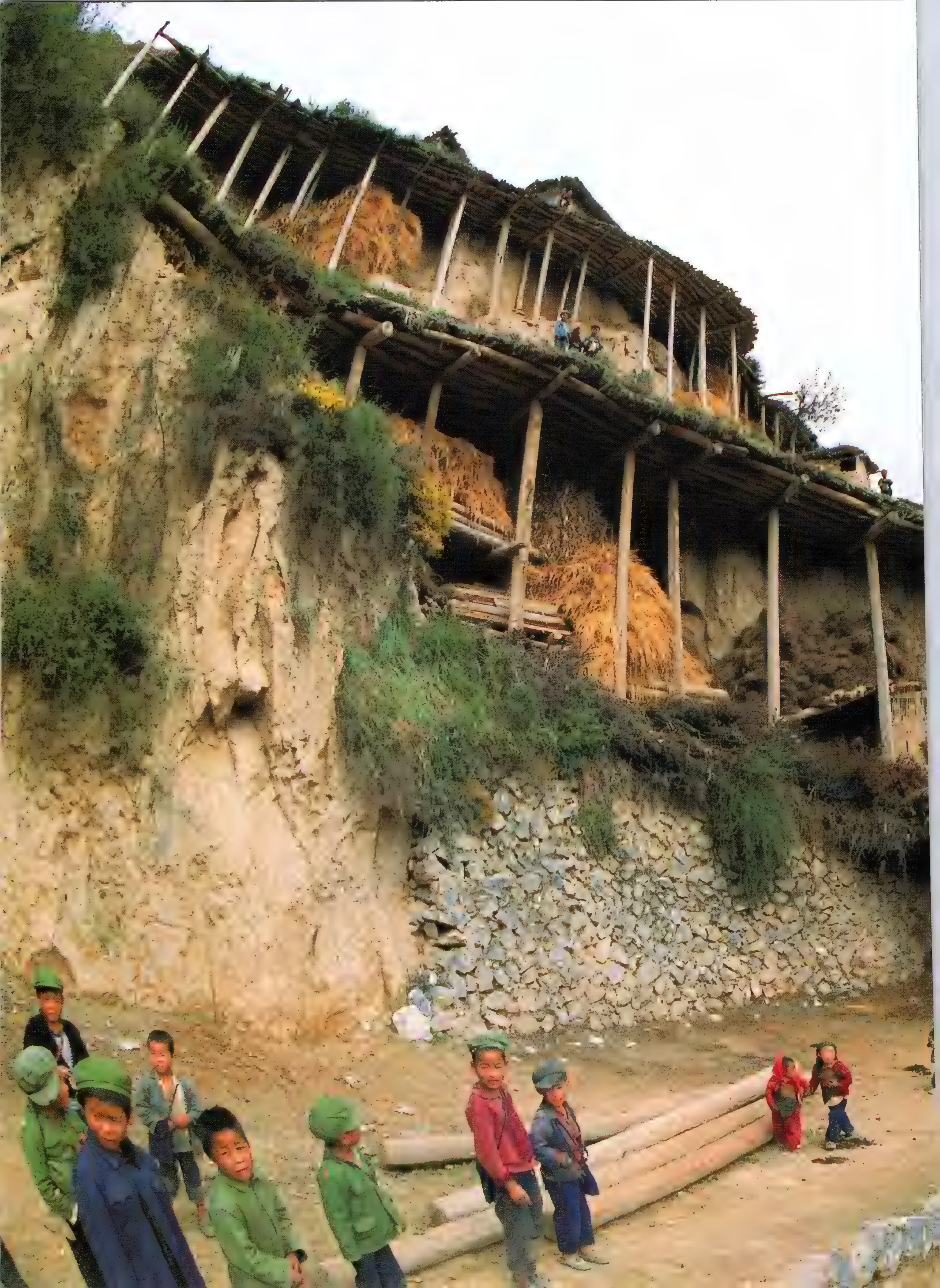

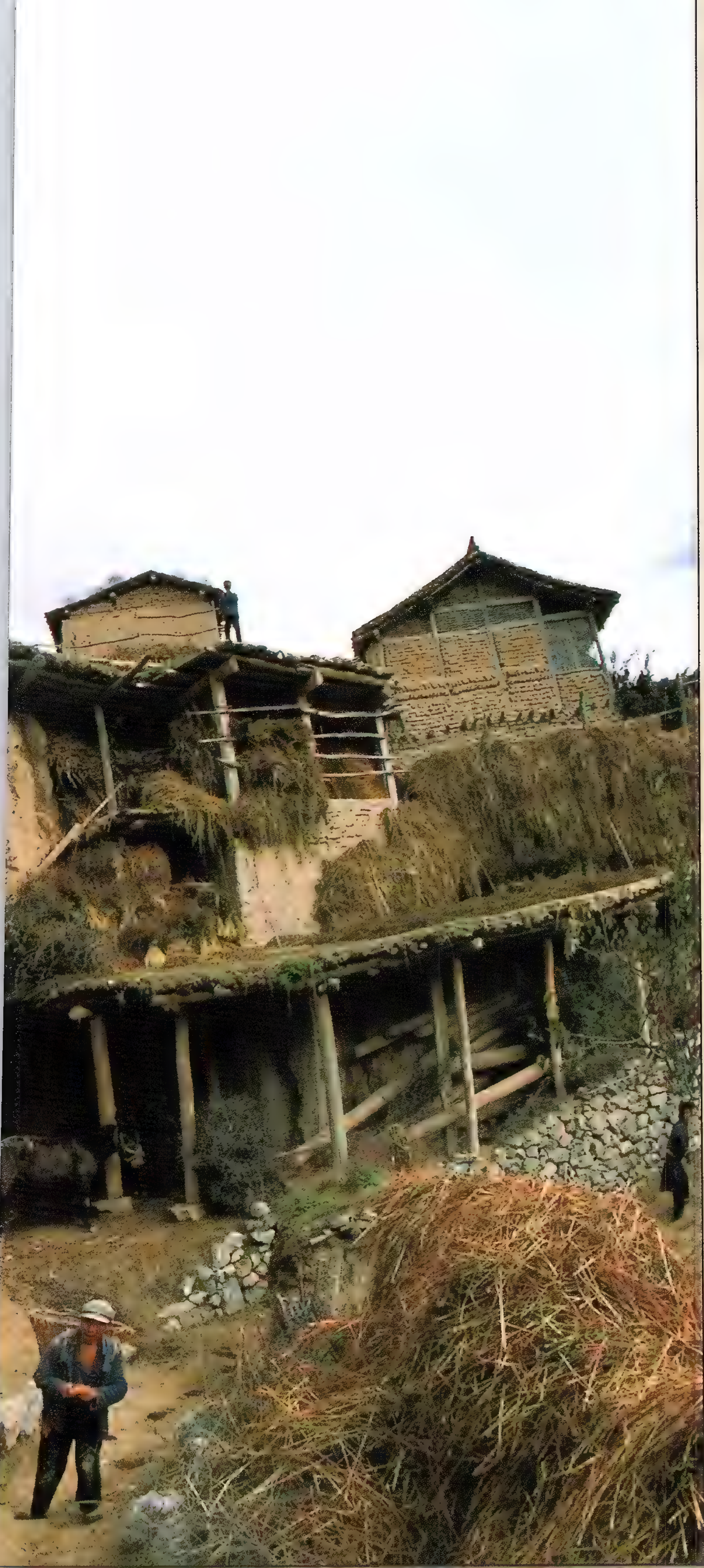

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SOUTHEAST GANSU

A Mountain Hamlet in Zhugqu

PHOTOS & ARTICLE BY
WONG CHUNG FAI

2

Duanshan's terraces rise haphazardly (1) as villagers weave their way through the maze of walkways (2).

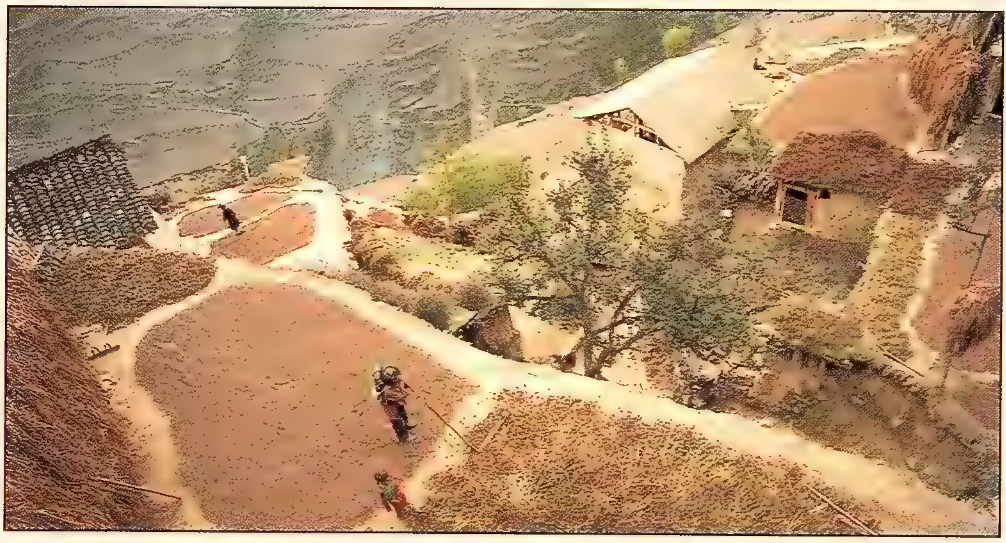
A hamlet built up the face of a cliff looms into sight at the end of a muddy mountain path. Set at an altitude of around one thousand metres above sea-level, it looks rather like a snake coiled around the mountain top from a distance because of its many tiers of paths.

Our discovery of this hamlet was pure accident. Last autumn, the mountainous regions of southern Gansu proved surprisingly wet, and downpours for several days in a row caused many a landslide on the road. As a result, we found ourselves temporarily stranded in the county seat of Zhugqu within the Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Bored stiff with our forced lack of progress, we could do nothing but peer out of the windows all day long. But this did lead to something, since looking at the River Bailong (White Dragon) which flows past the town and at the mountain up behind it, all of a sudden we noticed the silhouette of houses on the summit.

Some of the houses built on a relatively wider terrace at the side of the mountain somehow manage to incorporate a tiny yard for use for pigsties or cowsheds. Most of the rest, however, are only a few steps from the drop and the inhabitants move around by using the plank walkways.

These walkways are built of thick tree-trunks with a plank covering; the supports inserted into the cliff wall are even thicker and stronger. The walkway is generally not much more than one metre wide, and the surface is covered with a mixture of mud and coarse sand to make the footing safer and prevent slipping.

This hamlet is reputed to have been established more than eight hundred years ago, around the time of the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279). According to a senior villager, their forebears fled from the horrors of war and eventually settled here and in the surrounding areas, where they have multiplied over the generations.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We couldn't leave it at that! It took us about two hours to climb up to the hamlet. There we learned that its name is Duanshan and that it is inhabited by some forty households of Zhugqu Tibetans.

Gansu Province is home to a mixture of peoples, including Han, Hui, Tibetan, Mongolian, Dongxiang, Kazak, Yugur, Bonan, Salar, Tu and Manchu. The minorities amount to over 1.54 million or almost eight percent of the total population. Tibetans form the third largest ethnic grouping after the Han and Hui; there are around 305,000 of them and they are concentrated here in the southern part of the province.

Precipitous Setting

Due to the rarity of level ground, most of the dwellings are built on narrow strips of land levelled through human effort. The houses are piled one upon the other all higgledy-piggledy in what looks like a very precarious arrangement.

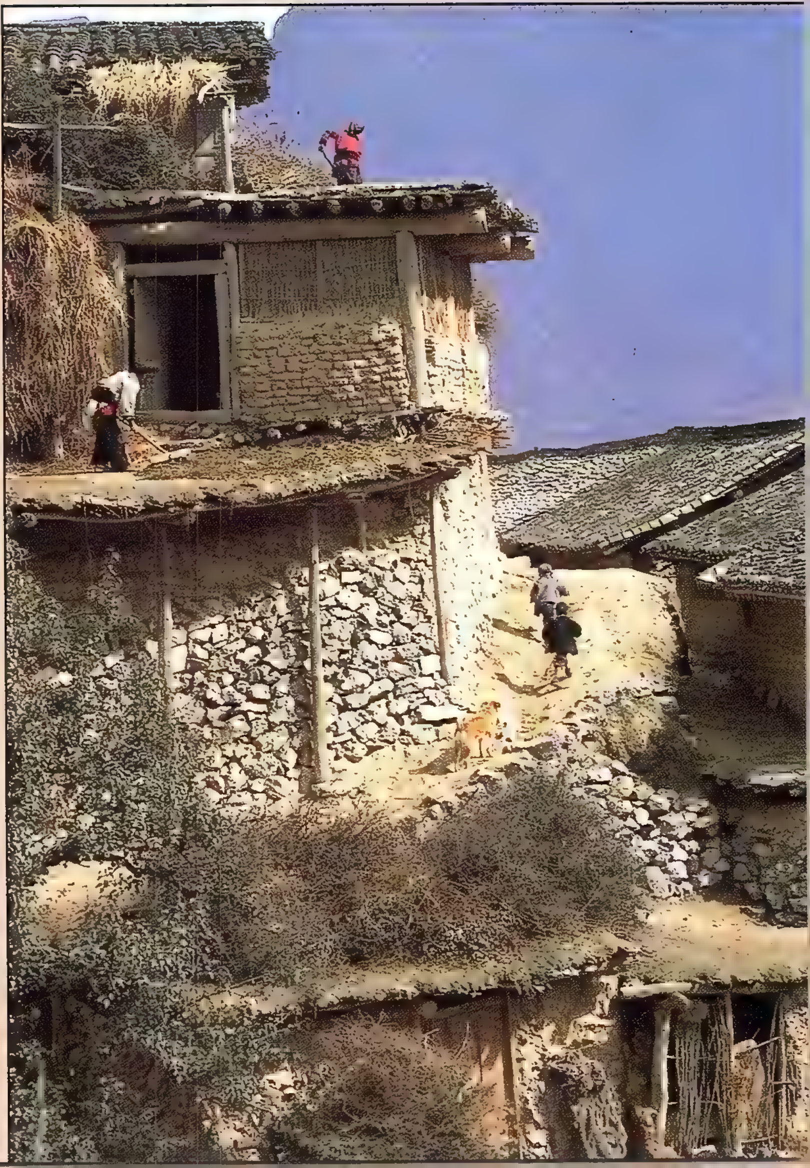
Interconnected Roof Terraces

The houses of the Zhugqu Tibetans are one-storey affairs built of mud, stone and wood. Due to the lack of level ground, nearly every household has a flat platform which serves many purposes, including as a drying ground for clusters of golden maize and pale-green vegetables.

Since the hamlet clings to the mountain, the houses are set on many different levels. Some people, when they walk out of their own door, are in fact standing on the neighbour's roof. Most of these rooftop terraces are in any case connected via the plank walkways, so you tend to find yourself invading a succession of household 'territories' as you make your way from one end of the village to the other.

Every patch of clear space is utilized for drying and threshing (1), and is often someone's roof (2 and 4) (4 by Wang Jie). Ladders connect terraces and walkways (3).

4



We visited one of the houses. Owing to the lie of the land, this particular one was a two-storey building with the lower floor serving as a grain store and the upper floor as the family's living space. The latter was at once kitchen, dining room and bedroom — there were no partitions.

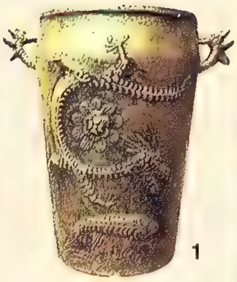
The stove in the living area was connected to the *kang* (heatable brick bed), where the warmest spot is always reserved for the elderly family members. Smoke rising from the stove year in, year out, had blackened the ceiling immediately overhead as well as a large part of the walls.

From a window I looked down on to a tiny pigsty in the courtyard below, actually a sort of cave, where several pigs lay supine. Nearby, a crude staircase carved out of a whole tree-trunk led up to a terrace. At the top this connected with the plank walkway and the rest of the village. Every inch of space was utilized.

It was getting on for noon, so our hostess started to prepare the midday meal. As if from nowhere she dug out from the cinders a round piece of bread about sixty centimetres in diameter. She tapped it to remove the ashes and handed it to me. The bread was made of a blend of wheat and buckwheat flour and it was so tough that we chewed until our jaws ached.

Like Tibetans elsewhere, the people of Zhugqu are fond of drinking *qingke* (mountain barley) beer. That was not surprising, but what did surprise us was the bronze vessel about sixty centimetres tall in which our hostess served the brew. The vessel was carved with dragons, fish, flowers and waves. Also unexpected was the method of drinking. Our hostess produced a bamboo tube through which we had to suck up the alcohol — introducing a note of restrained gentility and elegance!

2


1

Homespun Garments

Having eaten and drunk our fill, we watched our hostess weaving at the wooden loom which was set up at the south-facing side of the room. She moved the shuttle to and fro rhythmically, weaving very fine yarn into fabric.

We were told that the clothing — plus accessories such as hats and shoes, waist bands and kerchieves — worn by the people in the hamlet was all made of homespun. I took a closer look at our hostess. Her clothes were certainly different from what I had seen Tibetan women wearing in Qinghai and Tibet (although there are many local variations there, too). She wore a thick black scarf on her head, and many layers of tops. The front of her blouse was trimmed in red and orange. Her high boots were also of some homespun material.

Something had been nagging at my mind for quite a while. Why were all the people we saw women and children? Where were the hamlet's men? In answer to my question, our hostess took us to the plank walkway and pointed down the side of the mountain. On slopes far below were stretches of cultivated land planted with buckwheat and maize. The crops had already ripened, so all the men were hard at work harvesting.

Looking around me, I surveyed the many peaks of the Minshan Mountains, the snow on their summits glistening in the sun. On some of the lower peaks I could identify still more hamlets of Zhugqu Tibetans, just like the one we were in.

These people do not have an easy life. They have to climb up and down every day, or almost every day, for some reason: to tend to their fields, to fetch water, to carry farm produce on their backs to the county seat, returning with their baskets just as full with everyday necessities. Yet their ancestors chose these mountains deliberately as a place of refuge; they do not seem to be about to give up their way of life. ⊂

Translated by Ren Jiazhen

Elaborate bronze wine container (1), and a local woman weaving homespun (3). Happiness is a good harvest (2, by Zhang Runguo). The villagers live in the shadow of the Minshan Range (4, by Wang Jie).

1

SOUTHEAST GANSU

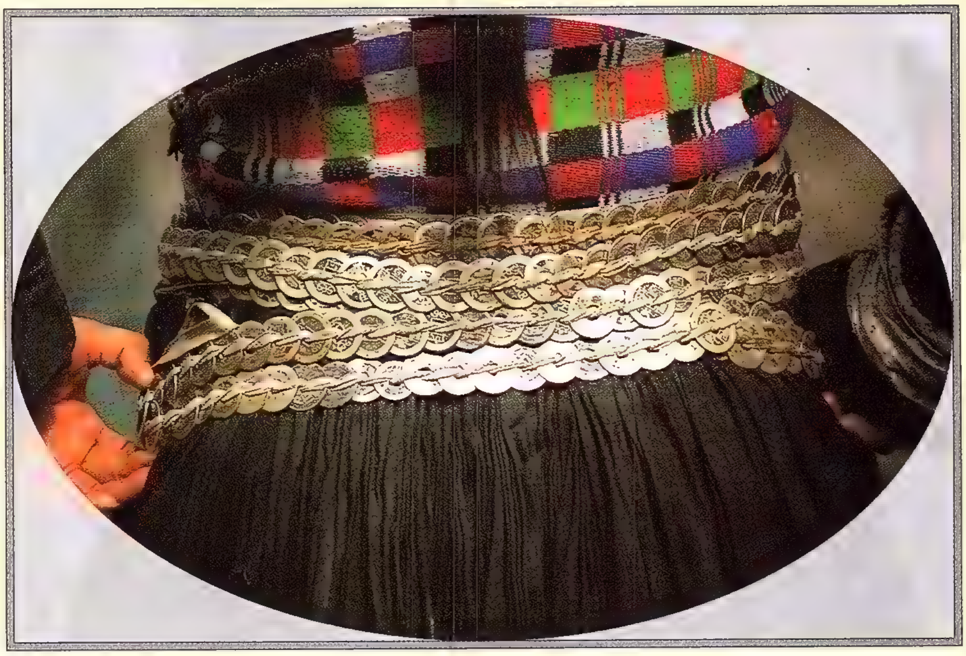
The Felt-Hatted Baima

PHOTOS & ARTICLE BY
WONG CHUNG FAI

2

3

4



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Scattered along the valley of the River Baima (White Horse) some twenty-five kilometres southwest of Wenxian in Gansu Province are fourteen villages, all under the jurisdiction of the township of Tielou and all inhabited by an ethnic group known as the Baima. Since many ancient tribes took their own name from the natural features of the area in which they settled, it is no surprise to find the Baima Pass and the Baima Mountains in the vicinity. There are also Baima living in Pingwu and Nanping counties in northwestern Sichuan, just the other side of the Motian Range.

The 1951 census of China's national minorities classified the Baima as a branch of Tibetans in view of the many scholarly studies which presented evidence of links (for instance, the language of the Baima still contains certain lexical characteristics of the ancient Tibetan language).

However, the Baima themselves reject this; they point to the numerous differences between themselves and Tibetans. They are supported by experts who maintain that the Baima are descended from the Baima tribe which was the largest tribe of the Di nationality, which lived in Gansu, Sichuan and Shaanxi during the Three Kingdoms Period (220–265). This they deduce from a sentence in the *Chronicles of the Northern Wei* (compiled 551–554): 'The Di, a branch of the Yi peoples of the west, are also called Baima.' It is interesting to note that the Di, mountain-dwelling farmers, founded no less than three of the Sixteen States during the confused period of the fourth and early fifth century. Despite all the evidence for and against the Baima being part of the Tibetan nationality, the matter remains unresolved to date.

Fascinated by the enigmatic origins of this people, we visited a village known as Caoposhan in the Baima Valley on the eve of the Spring Festival last February. This is a grand occasion for them, just like for the Han Chinese, so we were able to observe them in their best finery.

The women and girls wear a tightly pleated skirt under a long blue robe with wide sleeves. The collar, cuffs, yoke and hem of the robe are decorated with broad stripes or a veritable patchwork of fabrics of different colours. The robe is belted either with a broad sash, often of red woollen fabric, or with long strings of Qing-dynasty coins. Older women dress more soberly in blue garments with a black vest. Nevertheless, a closer look reveals that this vest is fastened with an elaborately designed silver clasp shaped like a pair of fish.

All the womenfolk, whatever their age, attach great importance to dressing their hair. They plait red woollen strands attached to several 'fish-bone' discs into their long tresses, cover the hair with a black turban, then coil up the plait with the red strands so that it hangs on one side. They say the discs ward off evil spirits. Some women even make a sort of pendant for their necklace from larger rectangular pieces of the same material.

It was the jovial village headman who told us all about the intricacies of female Baima attire. He himself – like all the men – was wearing a long black crossover gown and a small felt hat with a hilarious crimped edge, embroidered with a few flowers and decorated with a long white feather from a cockerel's tail. Scholars maintain this feathered hat was worn by ancient Tibetans too, but the Baima

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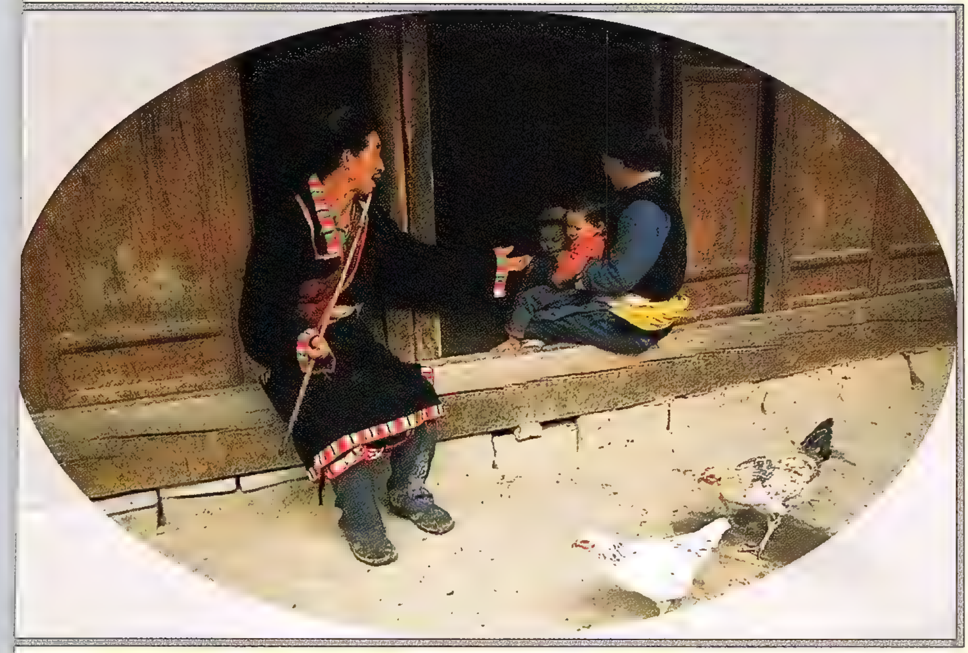
The ebullient headman of Caoposhan (4). Details of Baima dress: the famous felt hat (1), carefully crafted silver fish clasp used by older women (2), belt made from Qing-dynasty coins (5). It is less common to see women wearing felt hats (3) (3 and 5 by Chen Yunguang).

1



3

elieve it is unique to them. The hat is also orn by women on occasion.

Why the cock's feather? The headman elated the following story. The ancestors of he Baima were once defeated in battle and led, pursued by the enemy. In their xhaustion the fugitives were unable to ontinue and fell into a deep sleep. Luckily, ince the enemy was still hot on their trail, hey were awakened in the nick of time by a ock crowing. The cock's feather has graced heir hat ever since in gratitude.

The village headman also told us another egend common to the Baima of Pingwu, anping and Songpan in Sichuan and the Baima of Wenxian in Gansu. This relates how the ancestors of the Baima of today's Jiangyou in Sichuan were worsted in battle on more than one occasion by Zhuge Liang (181–234), the prime minister of the Kingdom of Shu in the Three Kingdoms Period. Eventually, Zhuge Liang offered to put an end to the hostilities once and for all if the Baima would agree to retreat one arrow-flight, in other words, if they would surrender as much ground as an arrow would cover when shot from the bow. They agreed. But, under cover of night, the wily Zhuge Liang sent someone to plant an arrow in the mountains near Pingwu, one hundred kilometres north of Jiangyou. And, as the Baima had given their word, they had to withdraw to that point, losing a great deal of their territory.

We were invited to share the evening meal with the headman and his family. All the family members were present, since it was the slack season. The Baima are farmers, cultivating corn and wheat, but also *dangshen (Codonopsis pilosula)*, ginseng, and other medicinal herbs on the mountain slopes. Hunting is another sideline. Apart from rice and noodles, we were served mutton with sauce as well as some smoked, wind-dried pork. Several parcels of this type of pork hung from the rafters inside the house. Unlike the Tibetans, the Baima do not eat *zanba* (roast barley flour), butter or other dairy products.

Another difference from the Tibetans is that their main alcoholic drink is not barley beer made from *qingke* (highland barley), but a spirit made from other cereals, primarily maize. This is much stronger than the Tibetan brew; it may be as much as 50° proof. Even small children take a sip at times – the excuse being that it keeps out the cold!

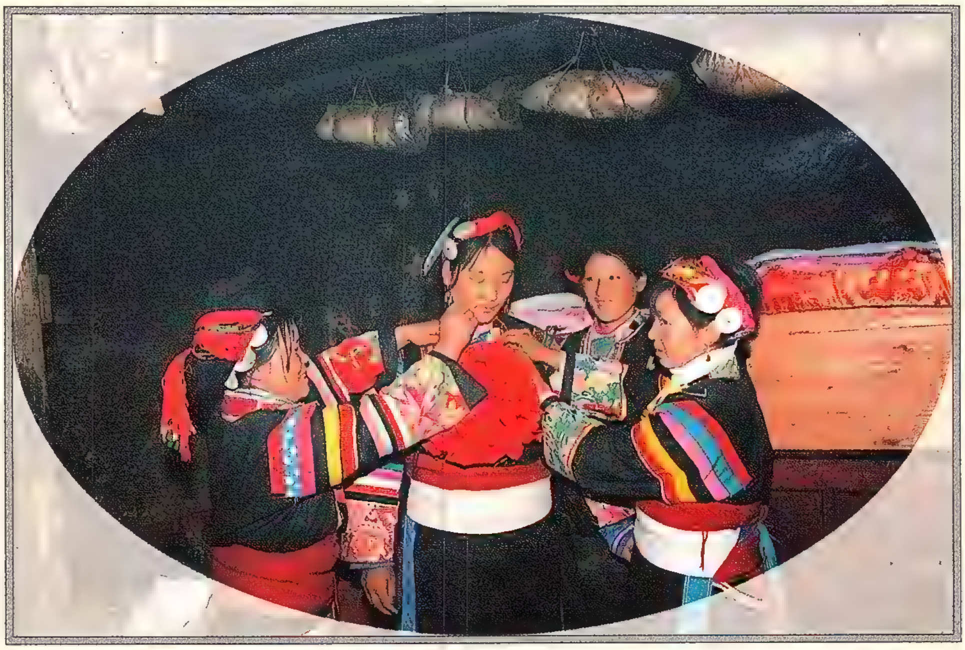
Apart from being the time for preparing and celebrating the Spring Festival, the headman explained, the twelfth and first months of the lunar calendar (normally January and February) are also an ideal time for weddings. The Baima do not generally marry outside their own ethnic community. They may even choose a mate from among their close relatives.

No weddings took place while we were visiting Caoposhan, but the villagers kindly arranged for us to see the 'devil dance'. This is a kind of sorcerors' or exorcists' dance originating from the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet, Bon, with many other elements added. Here, among the Baima, six masked villagers performed the parts of four mountain gods and two Bodhisattvas. The savage-looking mountain god masks were topped with pheasants' feathers and the dancers held a broad-bladed knife (symbol of power) in one hand and a bull's tail (symbol of exorcism) in the other. By comparison, the Bodhisattva masks seemed benign and gentle. These masks weigh at least one kilo each and, despite their fairly crude execution, have a kind of rustic charm.

Devil dances are performed at the Spring Festival to pray for good harvests and good fortune in the year ahead. Despite the Bodhisattva masks, the Baima are not followers of Tibetan Buddhism. They worship the spirits of nature they sense in mountains, water, fire, trees and caves. Although the names and images of the mountain gods vary from village to village, all Baima villagers have one thing in common. The performers dressed as the mountain gods are invited into their homes and given warm hospitality at the New Year celebrations, as proxies for the mountain gods themselves.

Translated by Gu Weizhou

'Fish-bone' ornaments on the headdress (1) and as a necklace centrepiece (2). A Baima elder in typical dress with the locally favoured pipe (3). Dressing the bride (4, by He Guoqiang).



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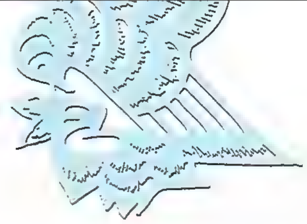


SOUTHEAST GANSU

Facets of Life in Rural Longdong

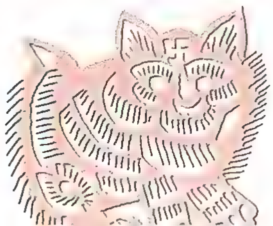
TEXT BY CAO WU

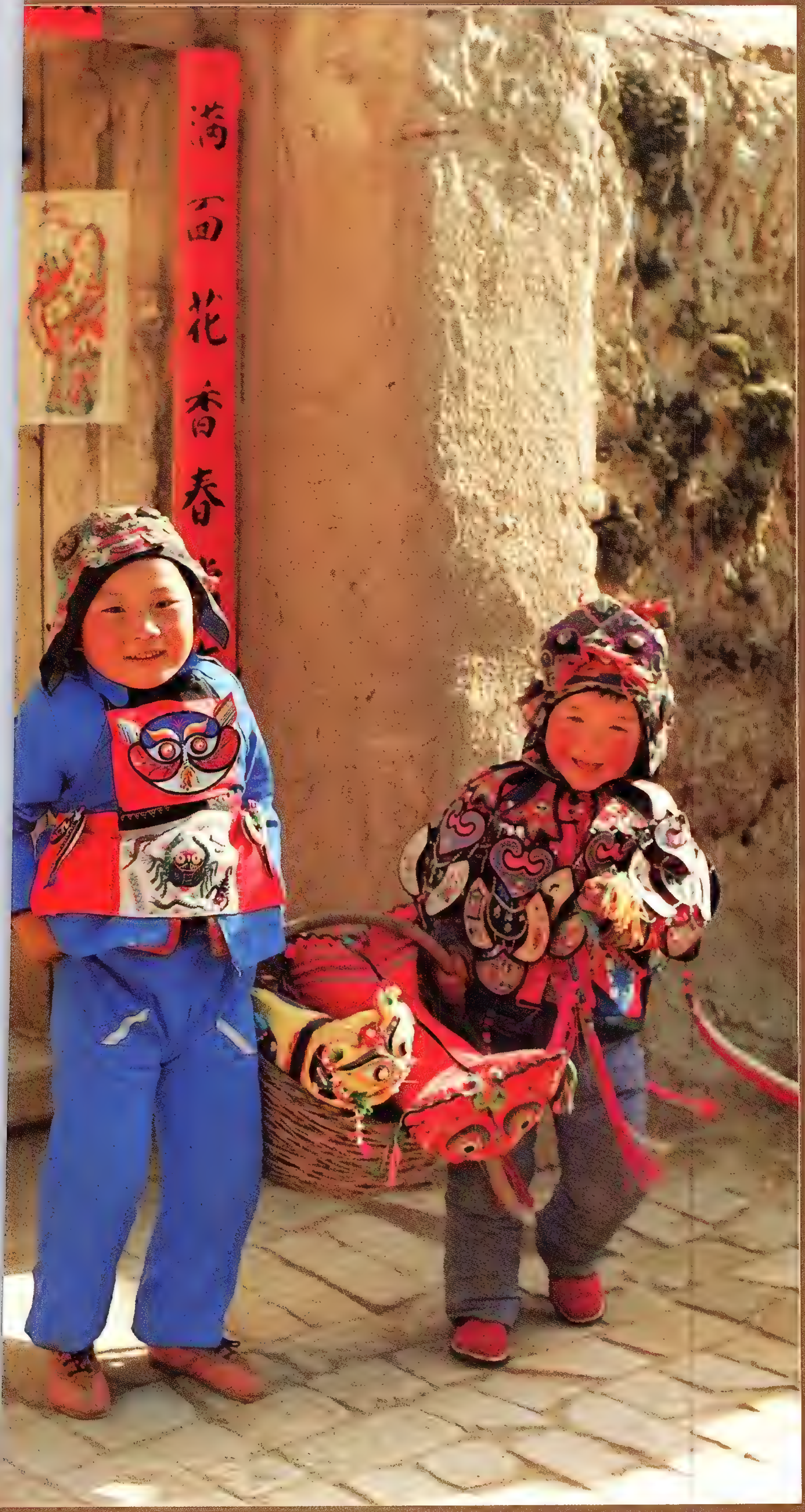
The names of the towns and cities along the Gansu Corridor in the province of that name include some which are among the best-known in all of China, especially to those interested in ancient culture and history. We only have to think of Dunhuang, Jiayuguan, Wuwei, Lanzhou ... all the string of places along the old Silk Road. But the story is very different when we turn to eastern Gansu, that pocket of territory squeezed up between Ningxia and Shaanxi.

Eastern Gansu or Longdong, which comprises the districts of Qingyang and Pingliang, covers an area of 24,000 square kilometres. Its name comes from the former name (Longshan) of the Liupan Range; the area to the west of the mountains became known as Longxi, that to the east Longdong. It falls within the western boundary of the loess plateau in northern China. Tributaries of the Weihe (itself a major tributary of the Huanghe or Yellow River) such as the Malian, Puhe and Huanjiang flow through the area, washing down a great amount of loess soil on their course towards the east. As they criss-cross the plateau, they gouge out gullies and dig ravines, aided by the wind and rain. This moulding of the loess plateau by the forces of nature is said to have been going on for around a million years.

Relics unearthed from more than twenty sites in Jiangjiawan in Zhenyuan County in Longdong have shown that this was an area favoured by prehistoric man. Archaeologists believe that agriculture made its appearance along the valleys of the rivers Jinhe and Weihe as early as the fourteenth century B.C. Apart from any other consideration, the loess deposits of the area offered relatively easily available shelter in the form of the cave-dwellings which are still a feature of life today.

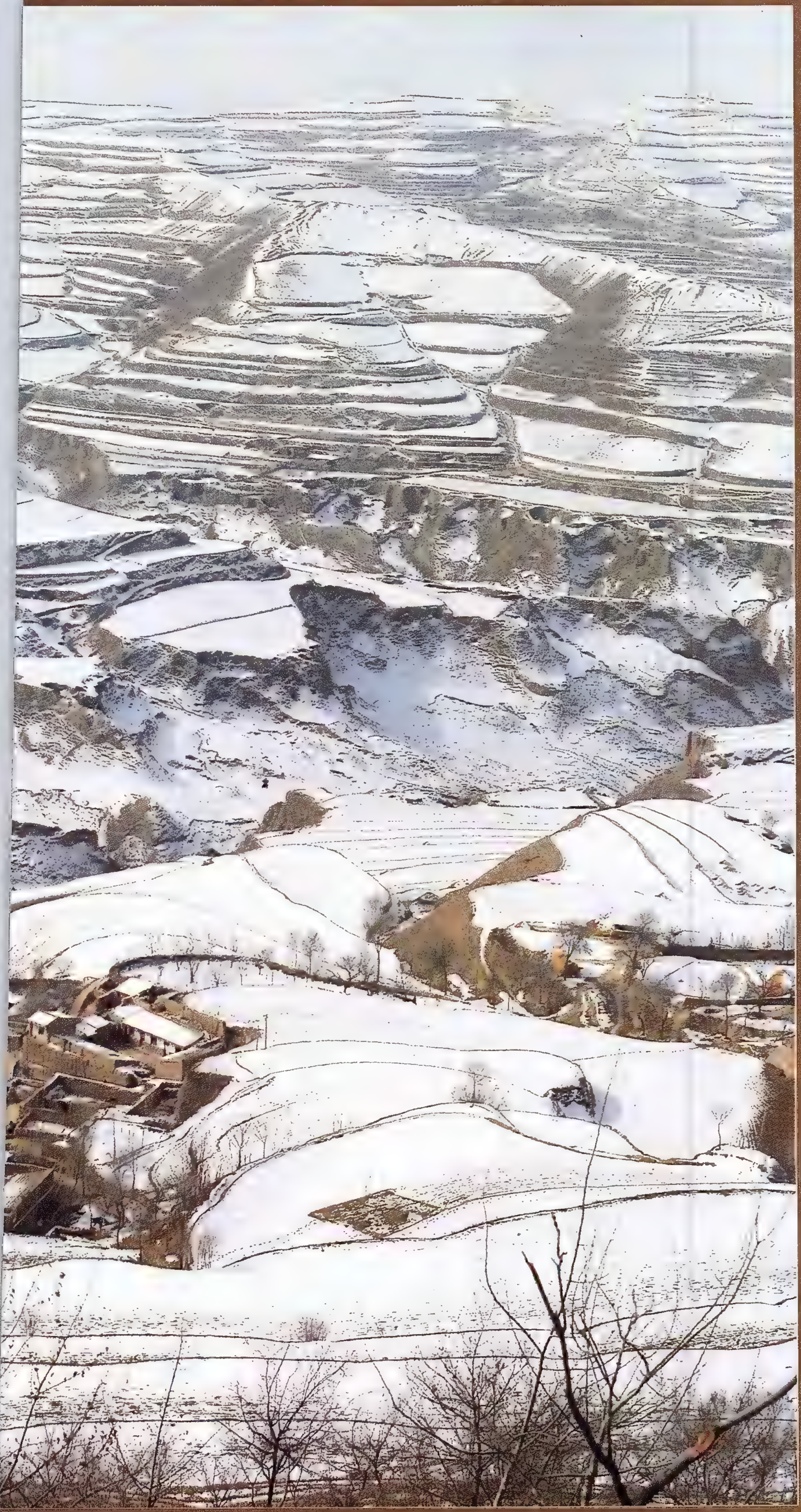
Thus, the southern part of Longdong lies on the loess plateau, while the northern part consists of mountains. The eastern part is different again, with luxuriant forests and meadows in the vicinity of the Ziwu Hills.





At festive times and especially at the Spring Festival, the people of Longdong paste papercuts on their window panes and doors and on articles of furniture, in addition to the fresh couplets hung on either side of the door frame. This is a tradition which has been handed down ever since the Northern Song dynasty, a thousand years ago. The papercuts are usually made of bright red paper and, with their symbolic content and their decorative effect, they add a touch of gaiety to the simple cave-dwellings. Red is also used for children's festive clothes and even for their toys, the warm, glowing colours shedding an aura of good luck over thoughts of the year ahead.

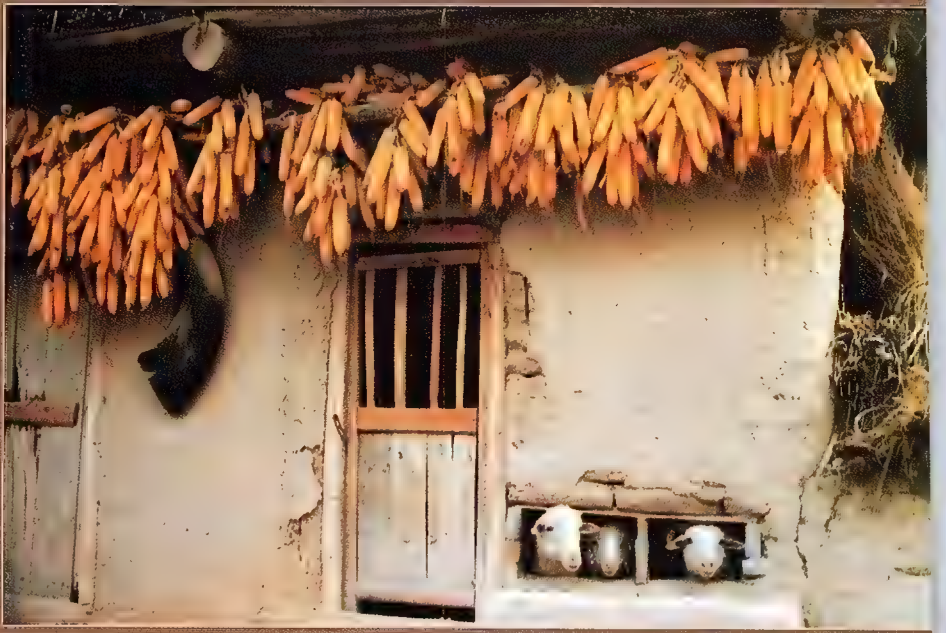
(Photo by Cao Wu)



With their simple tools, their hoes and shovels, over centuries, the local farmers have created sculptural masterpieces as they produced their terraced fields, preparing the loess hills for cultivation. It is on such plots and strips, their edges meandering to follow the natural contours of the land, that wheat, corn, sorghum, millet and tobacco are grown.

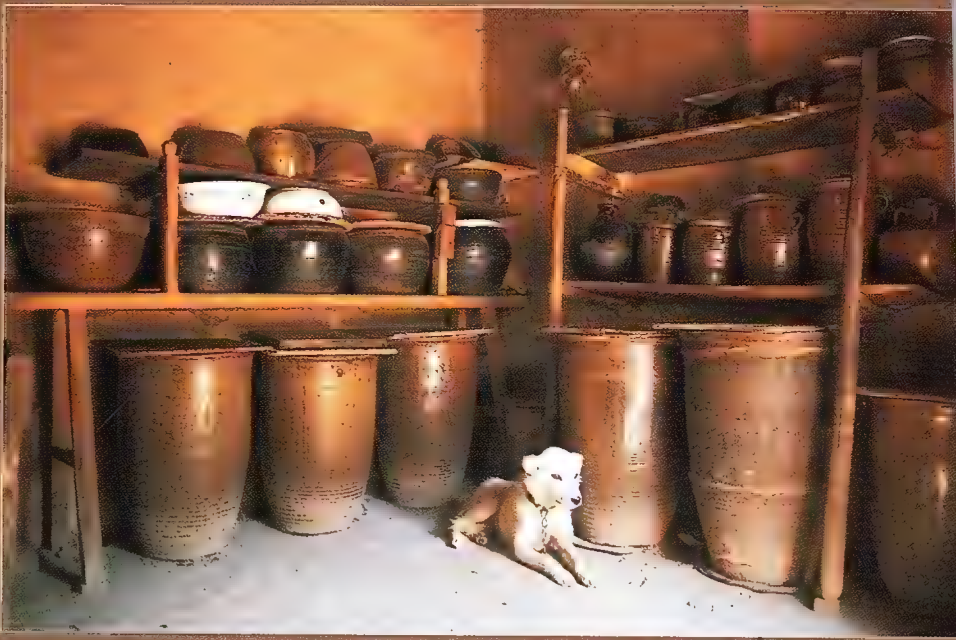
When winter descends, the annual hibernation commences. Life slows to a standstill for man and beast alike. Under its mantle of snow the loess soil rests in preparation for the next season's growth.

(Photo by Zhang Runguo)



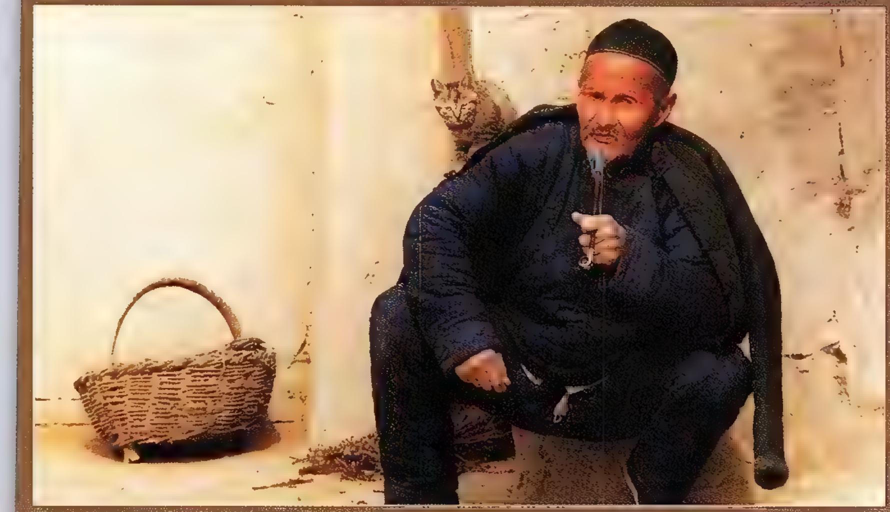
The courtyard of a farmer's house in the Pingliang area. The silence is broken by the occasional dog's bark or a rooster crowing. Even the sheep wait quietly in their built-in pen, although they are hopeful that their master will return soon and feed them. Food will not be in short supply this winter; the bounty of the harvest is evident everywhere in the bunches of golden maize.
(Photo by Cao Wu)

In the Ziwu Hills in the extreme east of Longdong, as well as in the mountains to the north, luxurious meadows abound. Sheep and cattle are the primary livestock of the area. Seeing such rich grass, who would believe that not so far away there are great expanses of loess, where clouds of yellow dust are whipped up continually by the fretful wind....
(Photo by Qiu Xiaoming)



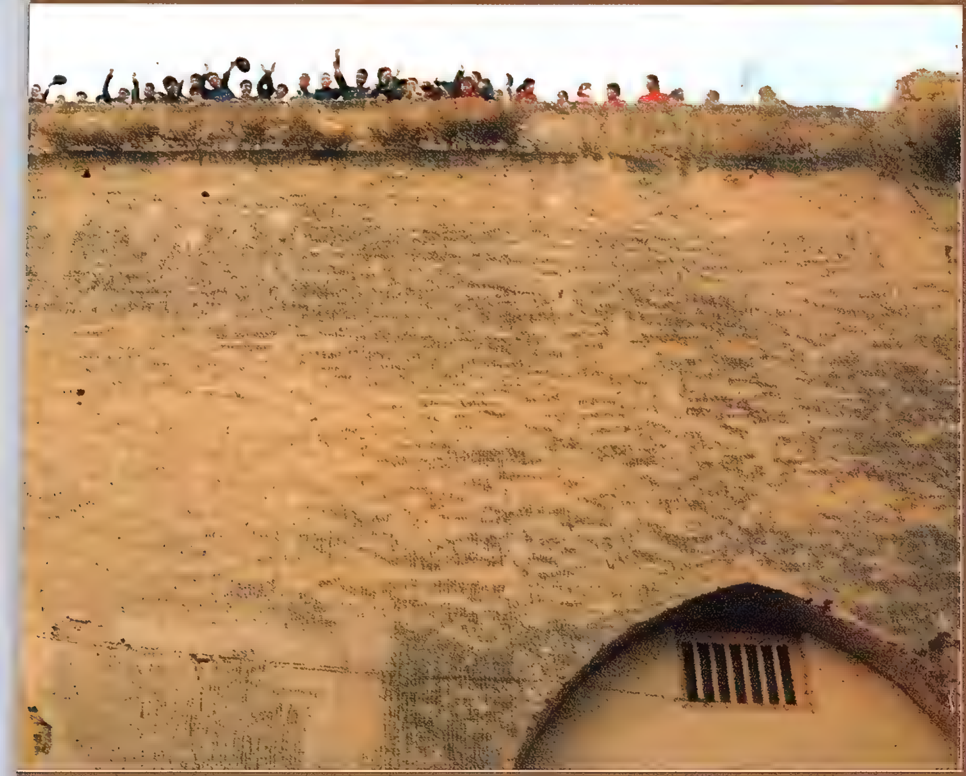
Though several rivers run through eastern Gansu, pure drinking water is precious. The river water is muddy and polluted and there are insufficient wells.

This family stores rainwater or water drawn from a collective well in large pottery vats and jars to be used for drinking and cooking. The dog is guarding what represents many hours of backbreaking work for his masters.
(Photo by Qiu Xiaoming)



Padded jacket around his shoulders for extra warmth, an old householder enjoys a rest in the winter sun. With a pipe in his mouth and his little cat purring her contentment in his ear, life — however simple — seems good. Having collected a basketful of dried dung for the fire this morning, he can afford to relax for a while.

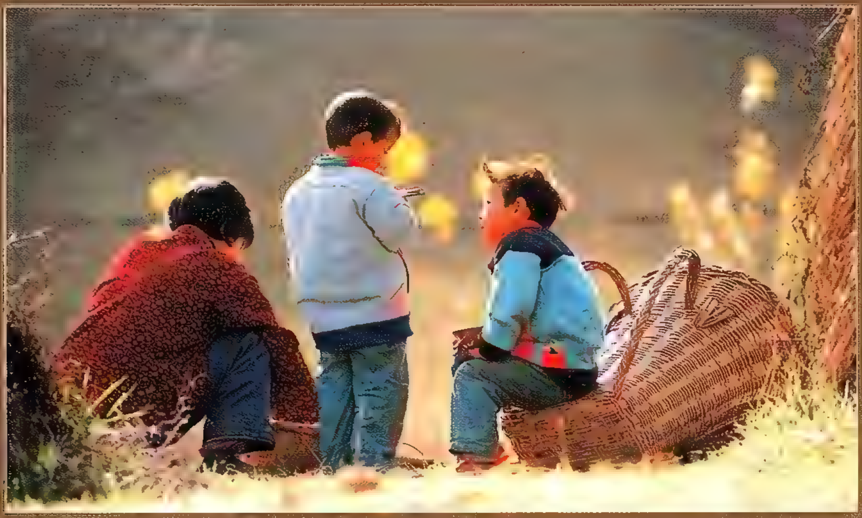
(Photo by Cao Wu)



Just like in the other major areas of loess in northern China, in Shaanxi, Shanxi and Henan, people often choose to live in caves dug out of the soft deposits. The cave-dwellings are often in a terrace-like row embedded in a hillside, but you also see individual ones. Some are even built below the surface of the ground and entered via a tunnel. A folk poem explains this type of dwelling's popularity:

> Build a cave-dwelling instead of a house,
> There's no need of bricks or beams.
> It's warm in winter but cool in summer,
> Living in it lengthens your life!

(Photo by Cao Wu)



Country children have to help their parents and elders with farmwork and household chores from a very early age. When a child is barely as tall as the local baskets used to transport things on one's back, it is time for him or her to start using it. But there are still plenty of opportunities for a rest and a game with friends, even when gathering straw for fuel.

(Photo by Qiu Xiaoming)

Translated by Wang Mingjie

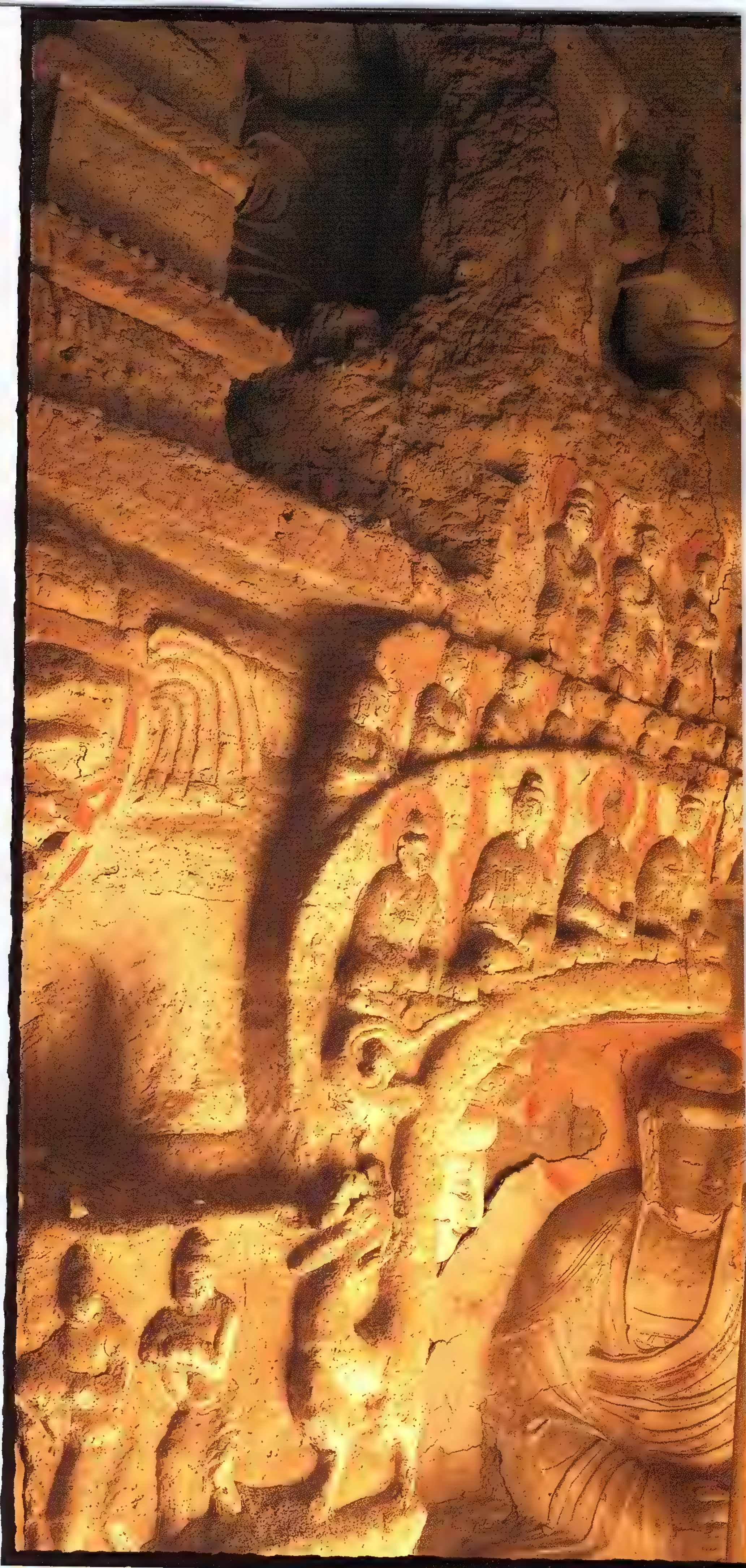
SOUTHEAST GANSU

Eastern Gansu's Grotto Art

PHOTOS BY ZHANG BAOXI
ARTICLE BY GU YUE

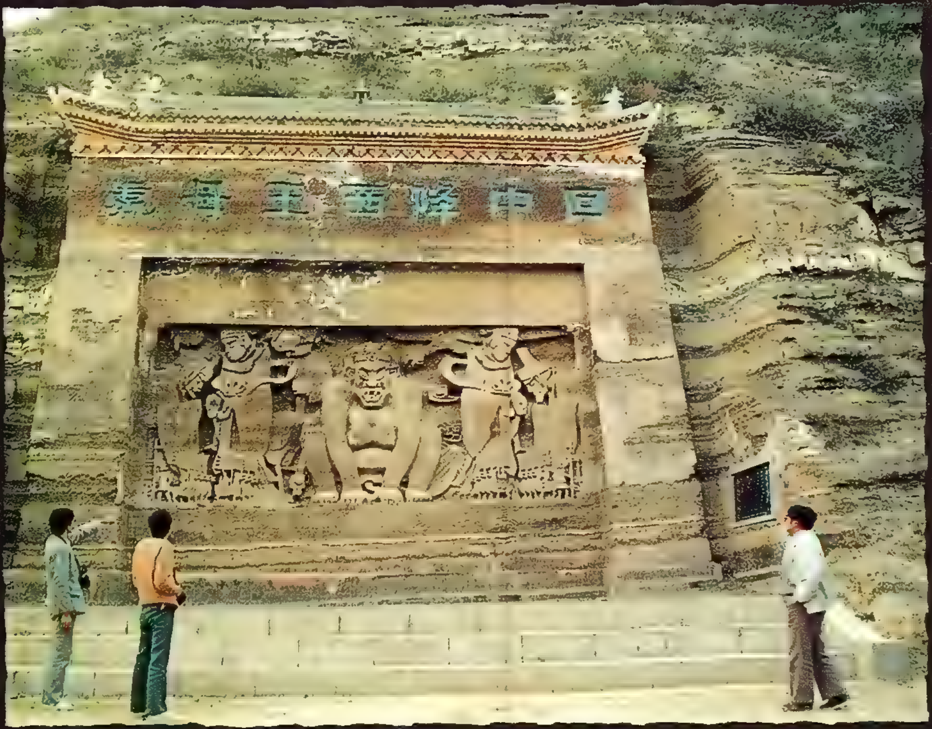
Chang'an, present-day Xi'an in Shaanxi Province, the capital of the Han dynasty at the time of the Roman Empire, was the starting point of the mesh of caravan routes known as the Silk Road which stretched across Asia to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. This was also the way by which the doctrines of Buddhism gradually filtered through into China. All along the Silk Road there are remains of great Buddhist sanctuaries, cave-temples and monasteries.

The Northern Wei dynasty (386–534) of the Northern Dynasties was a particularly important period for Buddhism, which was supported wholeheartedly by many of the rulers. Some of the results are the celebrated Yungang Grottoes at Datong in Shanxi, commenced between 460 and 465, and the Longmen Caves at Luoyang in Henan. But, apart from these undisputed masterpieces, there are many other lesser examples of Buddhist cave-temples built for the spiritual sustenance of merchants and other travellers and the shelter of wandering monks which are well worth visiting.



1

Named for a Taoist Goddess



2

Such is the case in eastern Gansu. Small as it is today, Jingchuan once had its day, its 'golden era'. According to the records, Emperor Wudi of the Han dynasty (reign dates 140-87 B.C.) had a road built between Jingchuan and Chang'an. Numerous travellers used to use this road on their way west or east and Buddhist shrines and cave-temples multiplied along it. One survivor from those times is the Wangmugong Grotto about one kilometre west of Jingchuan.

This cave-temple is located on a mountain, Huizhong, which got its name long ago. According to a Song tablet kept in a monastery there, when King Mu of Zhou (the Western Zhou, around 1066–771 B.C.) and Emperor Wudi visited the place together, Xiwangmu (the Western Queen Mother, a Taoist goddess) appeared to them at Lake Yao north of the hill. When it was time to go, they went reluctantly, constantly looking back, hence the name (Huizhong literally means 'turn back'). Gradually, from about the Western Han dynasty onwards, people began to pray and make offerings to Xiwangmu at that site. Many additional temples were built on the hill, which became known as Mount Wangmugong (Xiwangmu's Palace).

A strange anomaly is that, because of its location, the cave-temple is usually referred to as the Wangmugong Grotto — a Buddhist site taking the name of a Taoist goddess! Some people maintain that there used to be a statue of Xiwangmu in the grotto, but this is not accurate; the cave-temple here was intended for the worship of Buddha alone. It was excavated between 471 and 499 in the reign of Emperor Xiaowen, who was a fervent patron of Buddhism.

The Wangmugong Grotto has a stupa-like column in its centre, an architectural detail imported from India along with Buddhism, just like the very concept of the cave-temple. In earlier times, this stupa-column was the main focus of worship for monks and devotees. They could circumambulate it entirely, praying and chanting and meditating on the images and scenes carved all round. The column still stands firm, having survived several strong earthquakes.

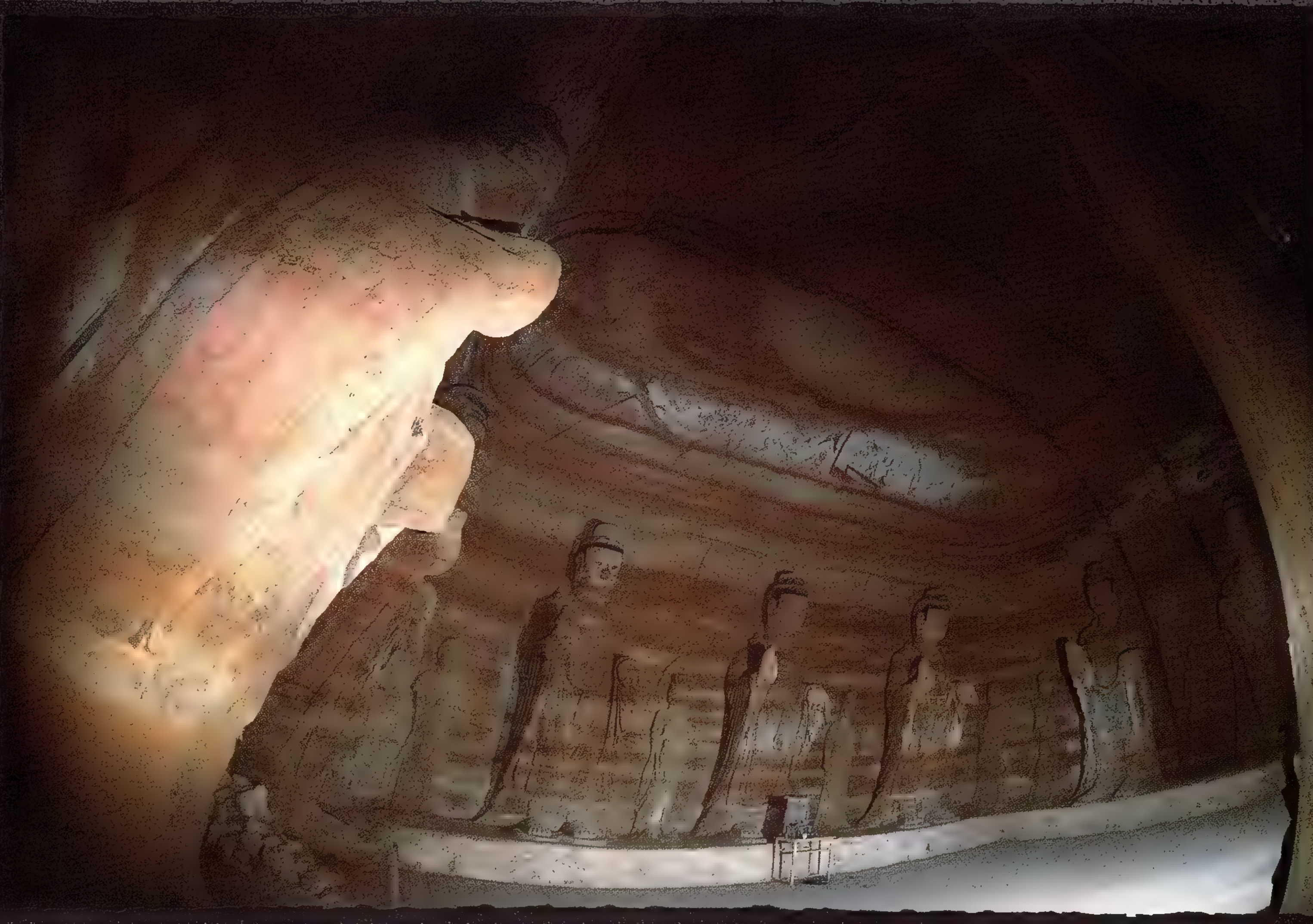
Inside the cave, on the four sides of the stupa-column and on the rear and side walls, are carved some two hundred Buddhas large and small. Solemn-looking Buddhas sit in each niche on the column, while on both sides and over the lintel tiny Buddhas and Bodhisattvas seem to make the cave walls squirm with life. Traces of paint are still visible.

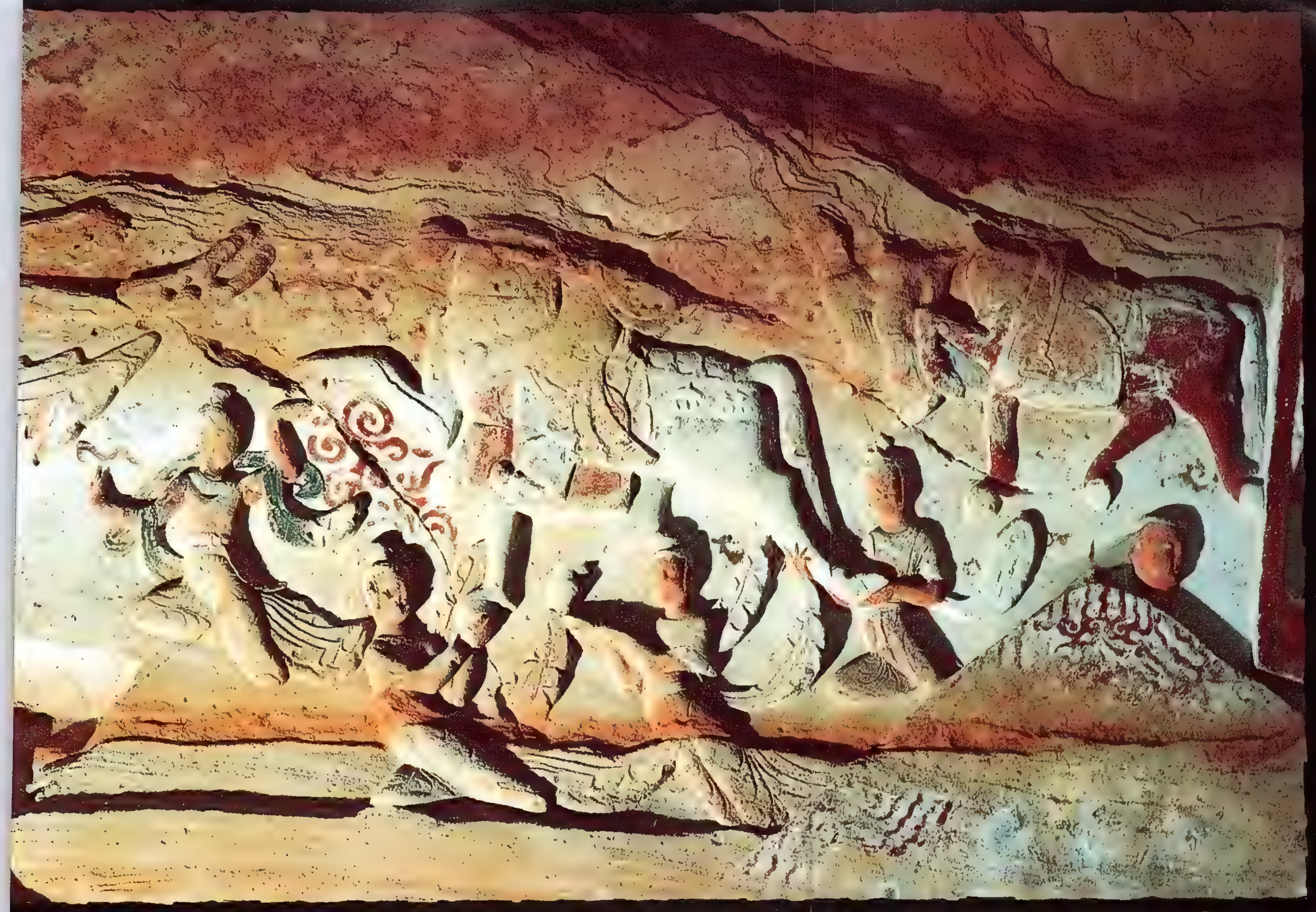
As a result of the sinicization policy promoted by Emperor Xiaowen, inevitable since most of his subjects were Han Chinese, the aesthetic standards of the Northern Wei were akin to those of the contemporary Southern Dynasties, which considered fine, delicate features the ideal. Accordingly, all the sculptures executed during his reign show a very graceful approach. The folds in the statues' drapery, for example, fall in parallel lines in the manner already used in carving at the Yungang Grottoes, itself a direct adoption of the tradition of the Gandharan sculptures of the northern Indian subcontinent.

Buddhas great and small adorn the central stupa-column of Wangmugong Grotto (1); with their more linear execution, the carvings outside must be of more recent date (2, by Zhang Runxiu).

The Earliest Seven-Buddha Group

1





Nanshikusi, the Southern Cave-Temple, situated 7.5 kilometres east of Jingchuan, was built in 510 with funds raised by the then governor of Jingchuan, Xi Kangsheng (a well-known general of the Northern Wei). Five caves have survived in the cave-temple complex, the best preserved being Cave No. 1 to the east and Cave No. 2 to the west.

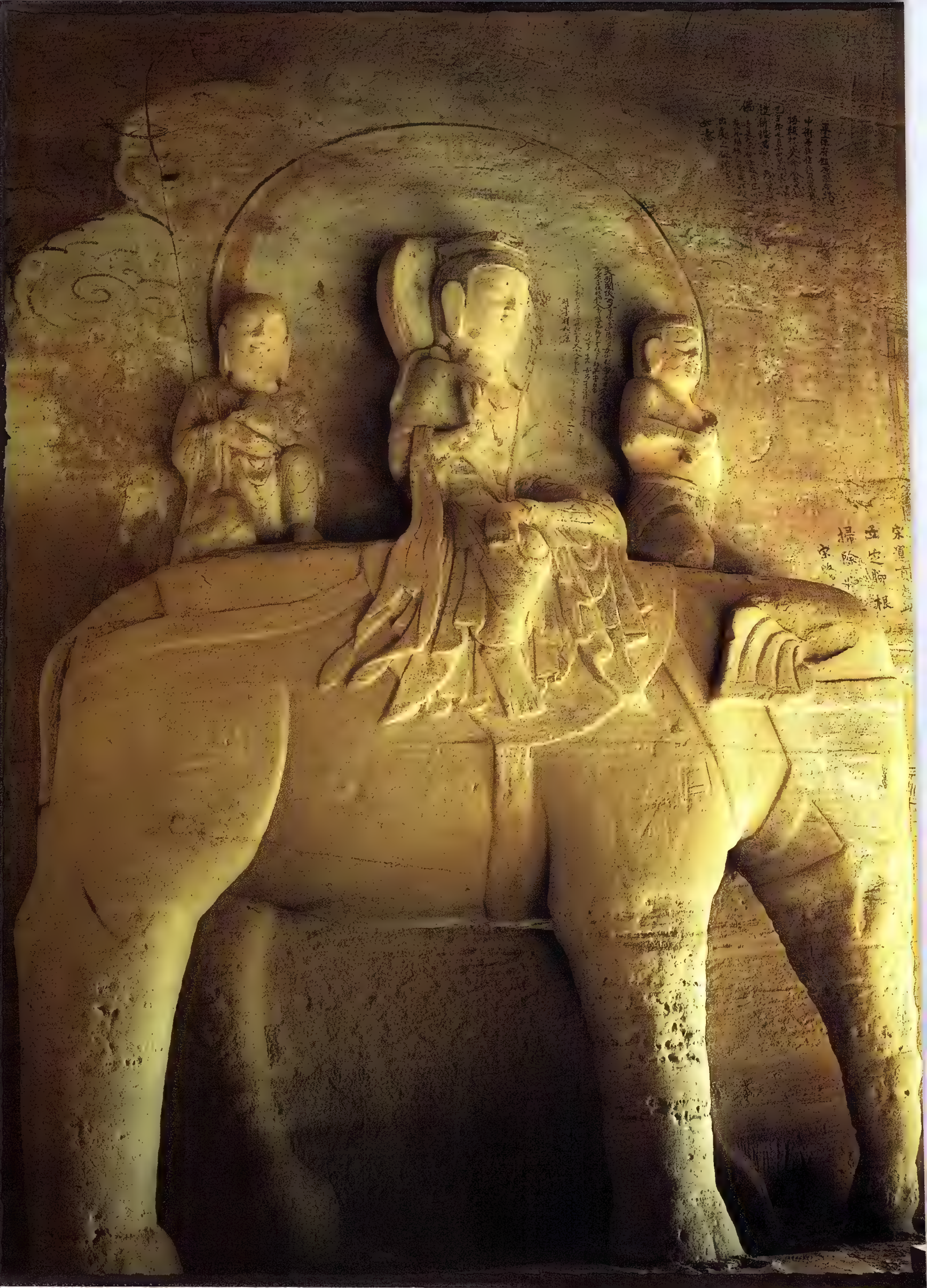
Cave No. 1 is the principal one. The artistic style of the sculptures here is a clear development from the style at the Wangmugong Grotto, completed around a decade earlier. By 510, Buddhist statuary was much more common in China, and sculptors had ceased to use the Brahmanic model of long nose and deepset eyes, replacing the features with a more sinicized look. The half-smile on the Buddha's lips also makes him more approachable, more human. As to the treatment of drapery, in this the Gandharan style was still followed, with clearly marked folds, realistic yet elegant. A major feature of this cave is the way in which the natural striations in the rock were utilized in planning the statuary.

The major works at the Southern Cave-Temple are the seven-Buddha groups and the double Maitreya. The rationale for the seven Buddhas was given in the Dirghaagama Sutra and later elaborated in the Ekottarikagama, which explained that Sakyamuni – the historical Buddha, born in Lumbini in southern Nepal around 563 B.C. – was but the seventh in a series of Buddhas, and that more would follow after him. Maitreya (the Buddha of the Future) will be the next. According to the records, seven-Buddha groups occur in India, Central Asia and China, but those here in the Southern Cave-Temple and in the neighbouring Northern Cave-Temple at Qingyang (dealt with below) are the earliest.

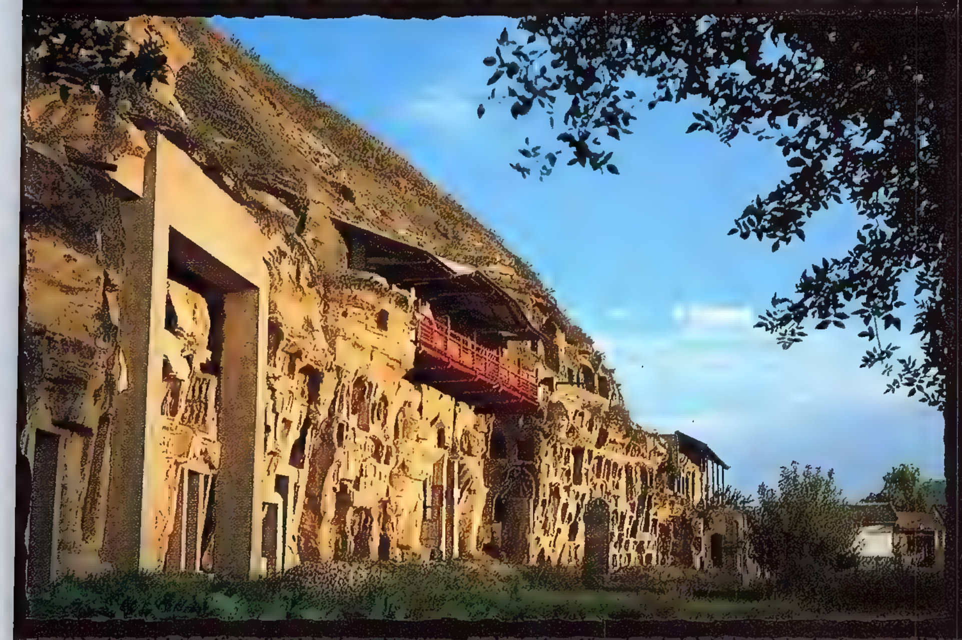
Cave No. 1 is of the 'seven-Buddha' type. It is thirteen metres high, seventeen metres wide and fourteen metres deep. The back wall and side walls each contain a group of seven Buddhas seven metres tall. Their expressions are solemn yet somehow benevolent as they gaze down from their stone pedestal. These colossal statues were carved out of the living rock in what must have been cramped and difficult conditions, yet they are perfect in every detail, testifying to the expertise of Northern Wei sculptors.

The concave roof of the cave-temple is worked with bas-reliefs illustrating tales from the life of Sakyamuni. One of them is very unusual in that the four lokapalas (Dhrtarastra, Virudhaka, Virupaksa and Dhanada), the guardians of the four directions of the compass, each cup one hoof of the horse on which Sakyamuni himself is riding through the sky. They are executed in a manner reminiscent of flying apsaras; these, however, are generally graceful and rather feminine celestial beings who dance, bear gifts or play music across the heavens.

Seven-Buddha groups line the inner walls of the Southern Cave-Temple (2); the frescoes above their heads can still be distinguished (1) (both by Zhang Runguo). Among the bas-reliefs on the cave roof is one showing Sakyamuni with apsara-like figures supporting his horse (3).



Richest Buddhist Art in Eastern Gansu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Twenty-five kilometres southwest of Qingyang lies Beishikusi, the Northern Cave-Temple. According to the records, this was commenced in 509, again under the sponsorship of the governor Xi Kangsheng, and was extended and renovated from around 535 to 907. Indisputably Eastern Gansu's richest site in terms of artworks, it contains 295 niches or caves and over two thousand statues and carvings. About two-thirds of the complex dates from the Tang dynasty (618-907). As with the Southern Cave-Temple, the seven-Buddha group and the double Maitreya comprise the main statuary.

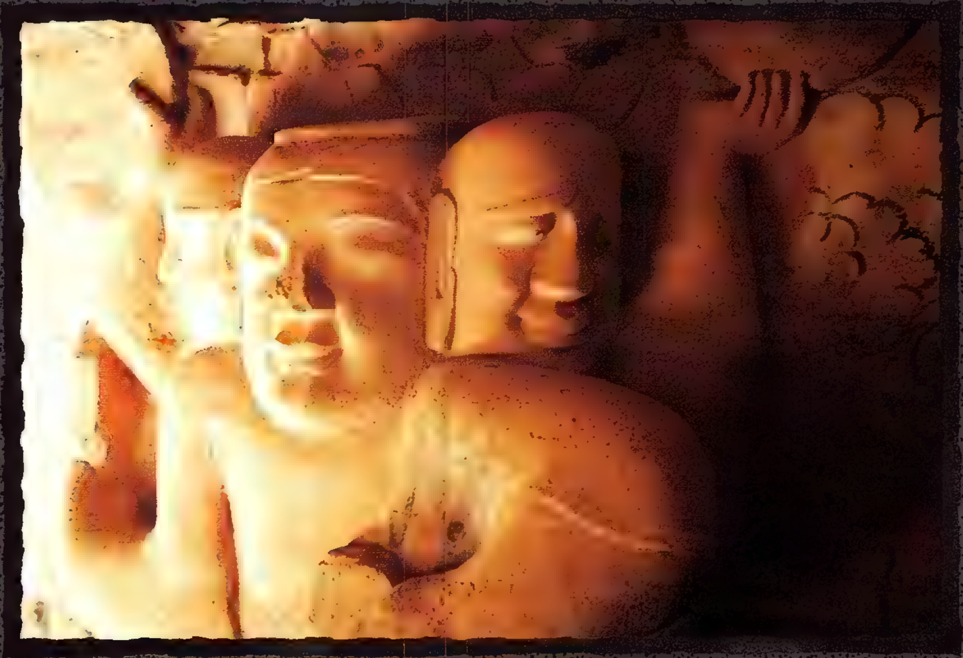
This site has a rather different atmosphere, since there are people living very near. Low houses are scattered in front of the cliff containing the cave-temple complex, separated from it only by kitchen gardens. But the central cave catches the eye immediately. It is protected from the weather by a wooden superstructure, and two huge stone generals guard the approach. Now classified as Cave No. 165, this is the main grotto of the Northern Cave-Temple. Fourteen metres high, twenty-one metres wide and 15.7 metres deep, containing seven eight-metre-tall Buddhas and ten ten-metre-tall Bodhisattvas, it is the equal in size of any of the large caves at Yungang or Longmen.

The heads of the statues are unusually large (one-fifth of the entire statue), apparently out of all proportion to the body. The sculptors were aiming at evoking a particular atmosphere in a particular environment. However, when you approach close and look up, the feeling of exaggeration drops away to be replaced by a sense of awe. The seven-Buddha group in the main cave is carved in a less sophisticated style than those in the Southern Cave-Temple, started one year later. But this was not because of any evolution in style but because Xi Kangsheng employed teams of craftsmen to work on the cave-temples simultaneously, reflecting a difference in personal interpretation. The works here are more massive, more 'rigid', than those at the previously mentioned sites.

In addition to the main figures, the cave contains a couple of fascinating sculptures. One is of Asura, a yaksa, a denizen of hell, whom – according to legend – Buddha raised up and made his protector. He has three heads, each face with a different expression. He stands in the sea, two of his four arms supporting the sun and the moon, while the other two hold a *vajra* or 'diamond sceptre', the thunderbolt symbol, to suggest his supernatural powers. The peaks and clouds shown in relief behind him represent Mount Sumeru, the sacred mountain of the Buddhists, often equated with Mount Kailash in western Tibet. Later known as the Bodhisattva Vajrapani, this complex figure also seems to have associations with the ancient Indian Vedic god, Indra.

Samantabhadra, the Bodhisattva of Universal Benevolence who is frequently shown riding an elephant, occupies a position inside the entrance to the cave-temple opposite Asura. Careful examination of this sculpture reveals the high artistic level achieved in bringing out the respective status of the figures on the elephant. All three – assistant, elephant-handler and the Bodhisattva himself – radiate untroubled serenity, their half-smiles identical.

The works in Cave No. 222 are from the Tang dynasty. The main figure here is Maitreya, with two disciples and two Bodhisattvas to right and left. He is 4.5 metres tall and well-proportioned. The texture of the skin on his hands is so life-like that the thick pads on the palm seem to emit warmth. According to records from the Tang dynasty, under Empress Wu Zetian (reign dates 690–704), certain monks spread the rumour that she was a reincarnation of Maitreya in order to flatter her. The result was that it became highly fashionable – almost a cult – to carve Maitreyas, which multiplied throughout the realm at that time.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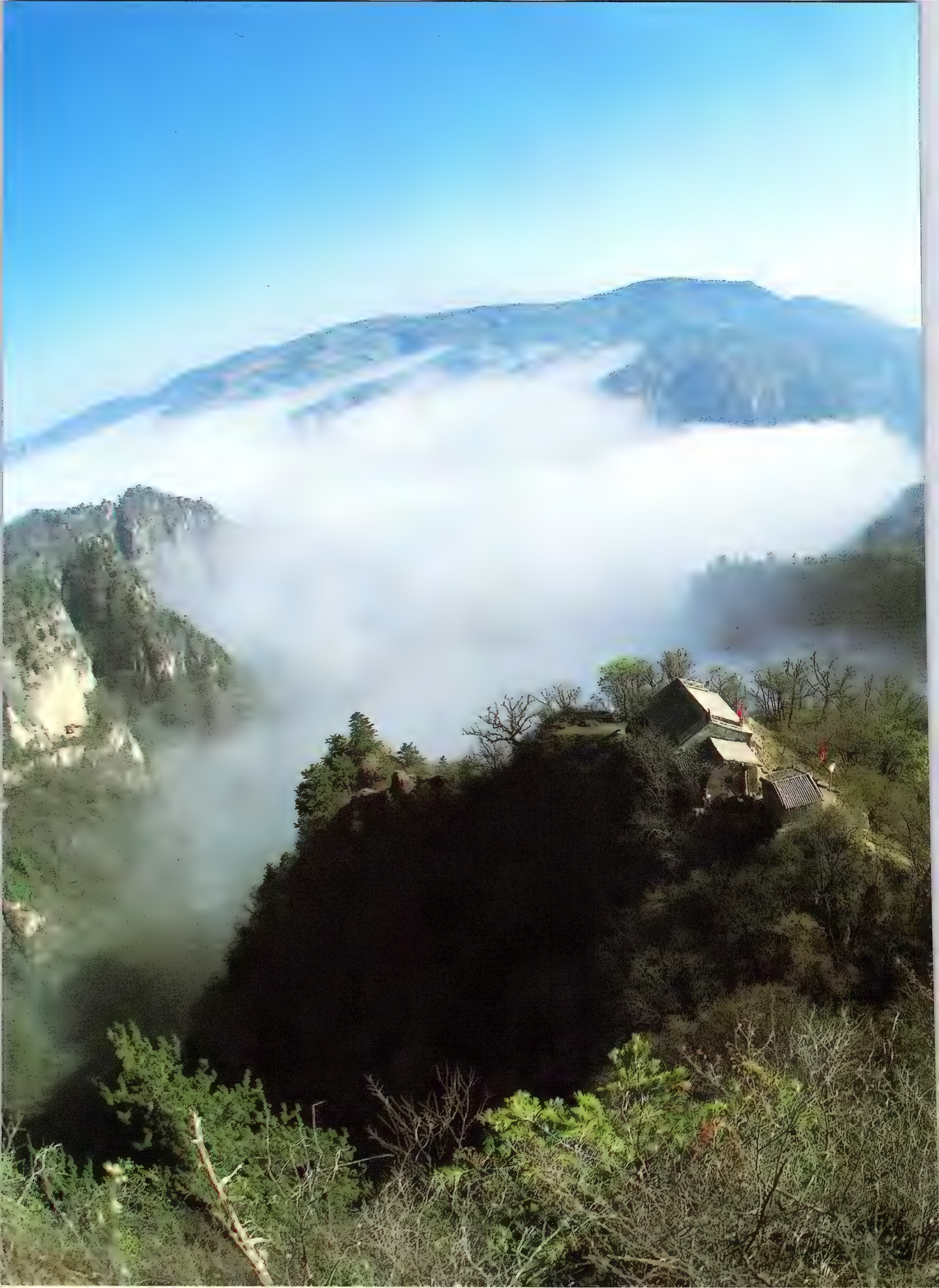
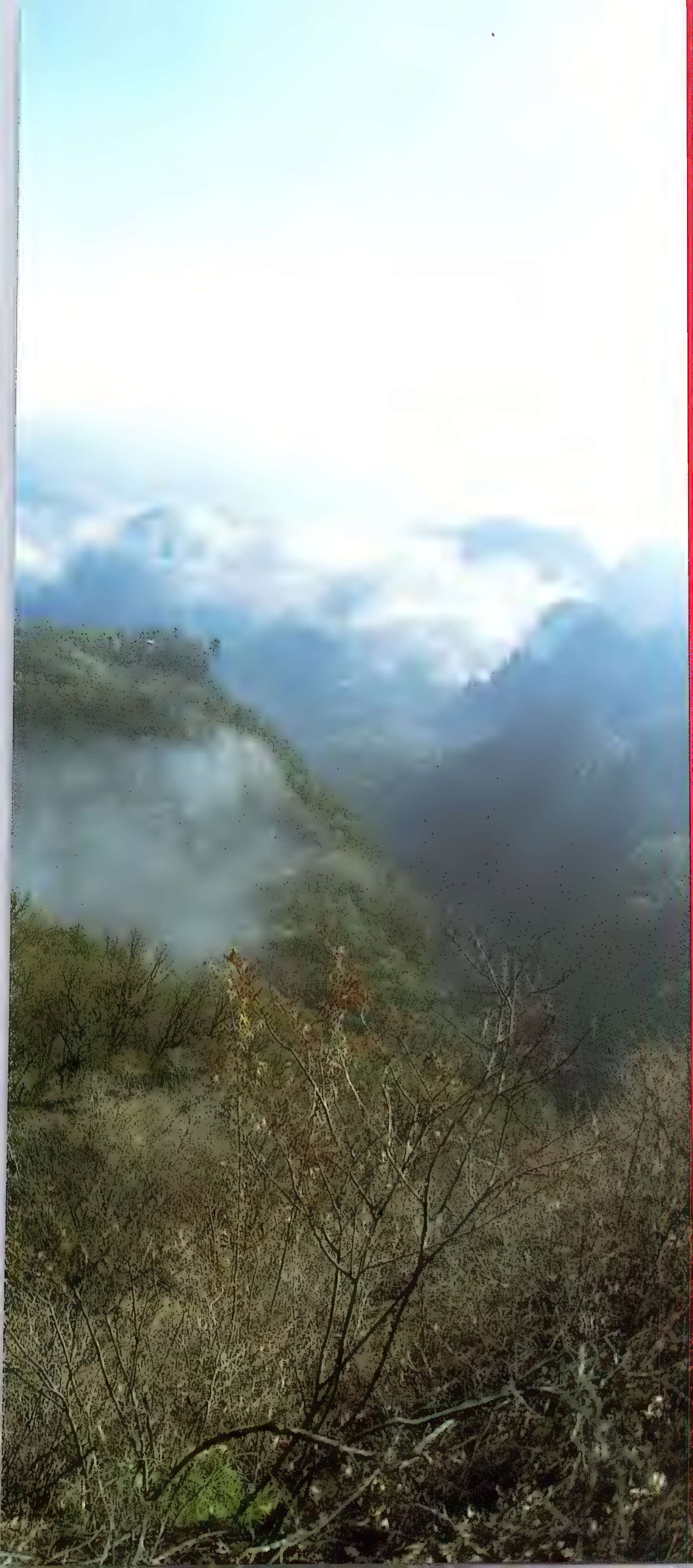
Translated by Ren Jiazhen

Samantabhadra on his elephant in the Northern Cave-Temple (1); overall view of the cliff at this site (2). Three-faced, four-armed Asura (3, by Zhang Runxiu).





1

2

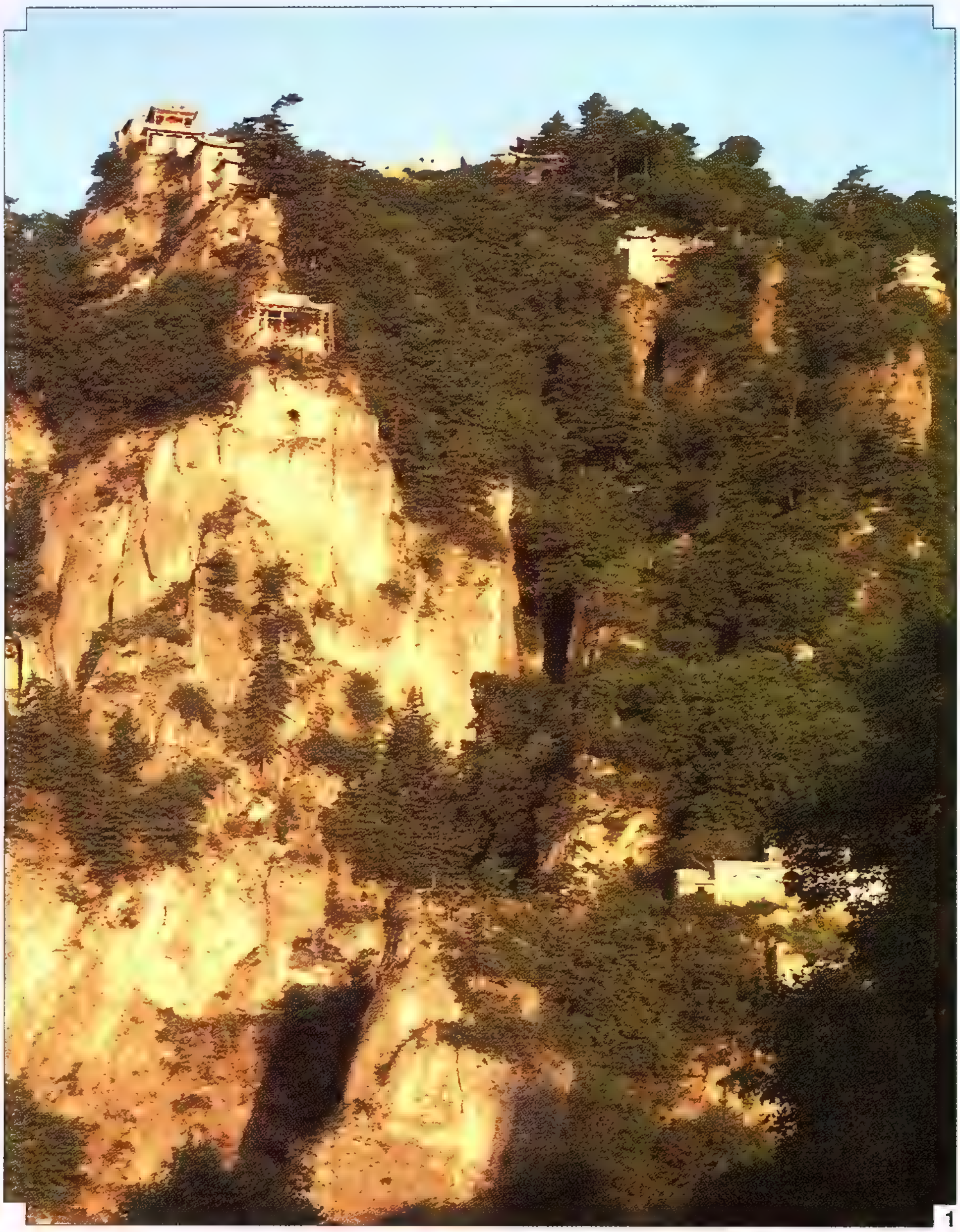
SOUTHEAST GANSU

Mount Kongtong, Taoist Sanctuary

PHOTOS BY ZHANG RUNGUO
ARTICLE BY RONG YU

3

A sense of peace pervades Mount Kongtong (1), whose Taoist community is supported by donations (2). The rotten log bridge at the foot of Yingbin Peak (3, by Qiu Xiaoming).



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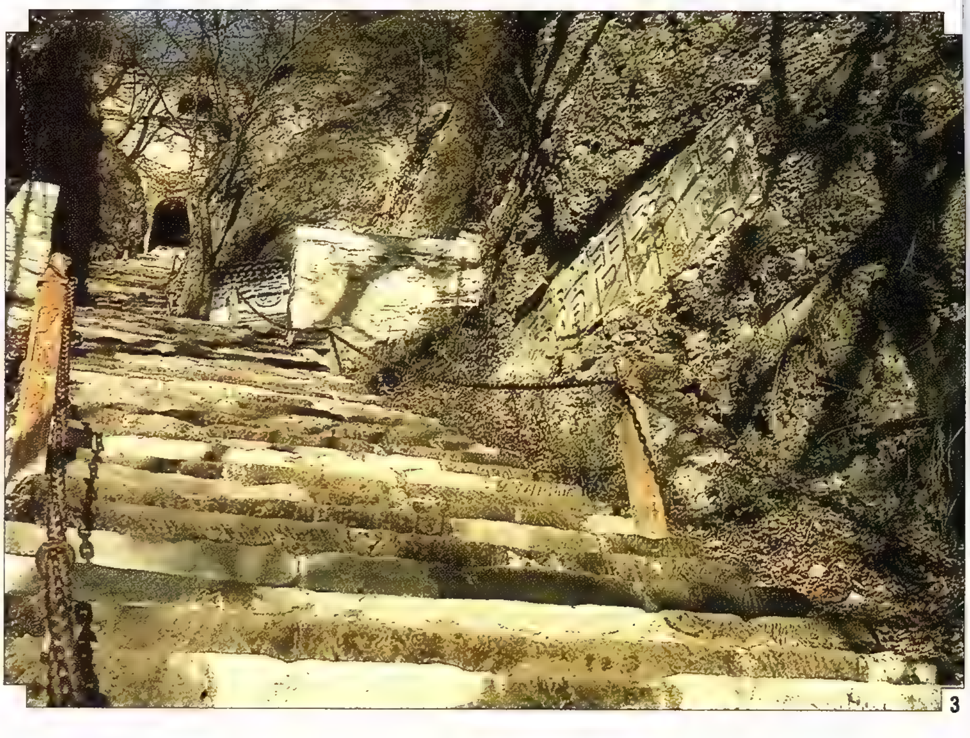


3

Leaving Baoji in Shaanxi one morning early, we drove north into the Pingliang region, advancing through gullies cut through the hills of stone and loess. Towards midday we arrived in Pingliang itself in eastern Gansu. Suddenly, after around fifteen kilometres more, the ravished loess lands vanished and before us we saw a lushly wooded mountain. This was our destination, Mount Kongtong, part of the Liupan Range. Rising to 2,123 metres above sea-level, the mountain has dozens of precipitous peaks separated by gorges.

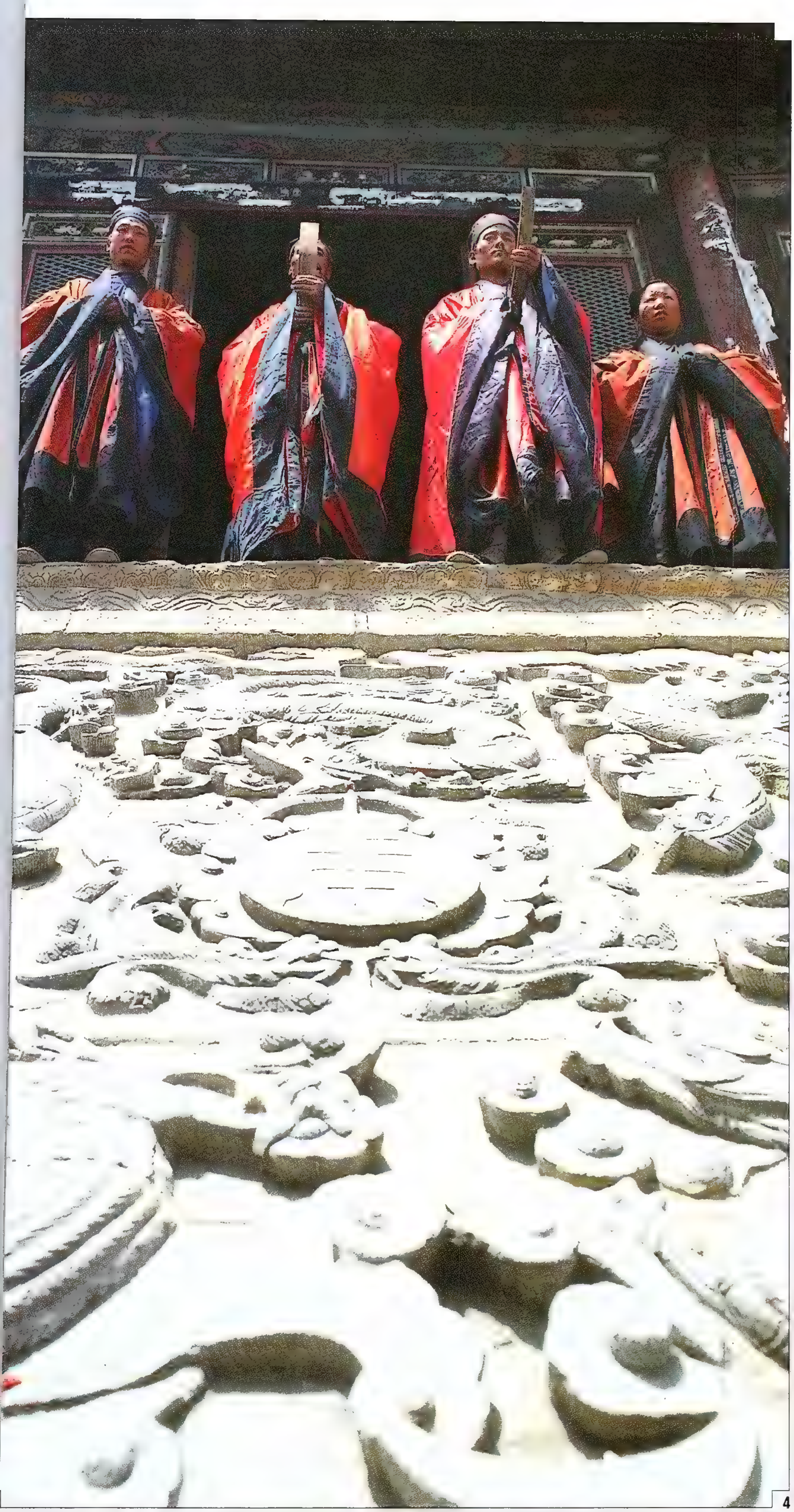
We parked our car at Taohuaping (Peach Flower Terrace) below the main peak — Mazong or Horse's Mane — where one starts any sortie into the mountain. A path of beaten earth and stone took us along a tortuous course up to Zhongtai (Central Terrace) half-way up. Pines and cypresses sheltered us from the sun as we continued up the track.

Like Mount Wudang in Hubei Province (see CHINA TOURISM no. 103), Kongtong is a Taoist sanctuary of renown. It is said to have been here that Guang Chengzi, a legen contemporary of Huangdi, the Yellow Empe cultivated the Taoist precepts and attai wisdom.

In the Qin and Han dynasties (221 B A.D. 220), Mount Kongtong was impor strategically since it was on the line of border at that time. In 220 B.C., the year a he unified China, Emperor Shihuang visi Kongtong during the course of his tour inspection in the northwest. Emperor Wud the Western Han dynasty (reign dates 140 B.C.) also came to Kongtong several tin while examining the situation in the bor regions.

From early times, Taoism and Buddhi flourished on the mountain, but it is the Ta sites which are now in the majority. In heyday there were forty-two temples, the m famous of which are still the so-called 'ei terraces, nine palaces and twelve monasteri However, most of them are in a very dilapidat condition nowadays.

From Zixiao (Purple Clouds) Palace Central Terrace we took a narrow path east Dongtai (East Terrace). This is the location



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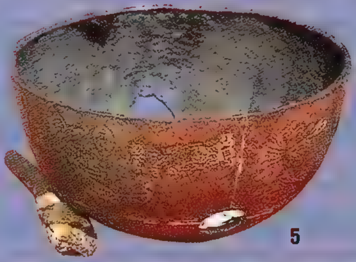


5

Atop precipitous cliffs perch temples (1, by Qiu Xiaoming) where priests welcome pilgrims and conduct ceremonies (2, by Du Yulin), especially during the temple fair (4, by Zhu Yanming). Part of the ritual paraphernalia (5). Here Huangdi is said to have received instruction in Taoism (3, by Wan Honghai).

Wendao (Prayer to Taoism) Palace, built in the Tang dynasty (618-907), one of the oldest surviving temples. Huangdi is said to have come here to ask Guang Chengzi about the nature of Taoism. When first built, this was an enormous complex, but it is quiet today. It contains many relics, and is decorated with poems and paintings executed by Chinese scholars of many epochs. A huge stone tablet dating from the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) stands in front of the temple; it bears a record of how the temple was built, reminding the visitor of its erstwhile grandeur.

We continued deeper into the mountain, with its highly eroded landscape which makes things difficult and sometimes perilous for the visitor or pilgrim. We encountered a striking example of this at Xiumuqiao (Rotten Tree Bridge), which spans a deep gully at the foot of Yingbin (Welcoming Guests) Peak. Even the hand rails on either side of the single log, which really is rotten, cannot hide the danger at this point. Eventually we nerved ourselves to do it and tiptoed across with some trepidation.

The next point on the path was Lianhua (Lotus Flower) Monastery on Beitai (North Terrace). This Buddhist complex set amidst Taoist sites is a reminder that the two religions existed side by side from around the first century A.D., gaining the upper hand then declining, turn and turn about, during the succeeding dynasties. By the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) Taoism had become very powerful again and many Buddhist monasteries were taken over. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, in the late Qing dynasty, most of the Buddhist places were in ruins and Mount Kongtong became almost exclusively Taoist.

This Lianhua Monastery has only been renovated recently. In the centre of the main hall sits a statue of Sakyamuni flanked by eighteen gilded arhats on stone pedestals, all vigorously individual in their expressions. The murals behind them tell stories from the Buddhist scriptures.

From the North Terrace, we went towards the southwest, again passing the Central Terrace. All of a sudden our path was blocked by a cliff. But then we noticed stone steps threading up between two vertical cliff walls. This was Shangtianti (Ladder to the Sky). We continued up this 'ladder', which must have an angle of seventy degrees. It consists of 366 steps of less than two metres wide.

Firmly gripping the iron chain rail, an antique in its own right as it dates back to the

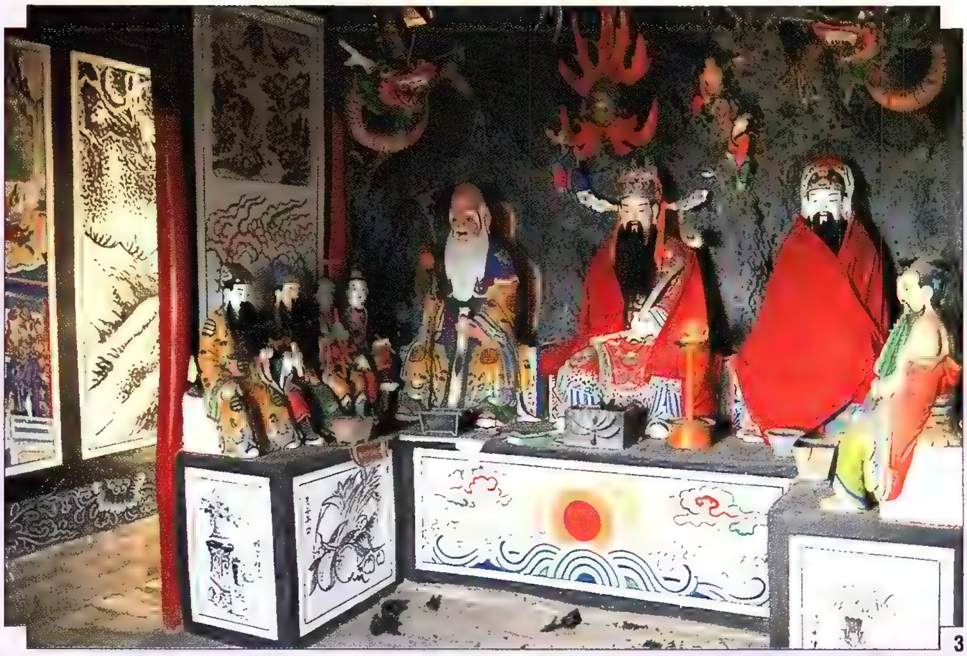
Ming dynasty, I climbed with extreme caution. When I looked up ahead, I saw two human chains, one going up, the other coming down, both moving in slow motion. I had to be very aware of what was happening above me because the man in front happened to be rather tall, with big feet, and clumsy in his movements. One misplaced step on his part would have meant his foot on my head!

Continuing, I noticed five large characters carved on the cliff. Their message? 'Here Huangdi was instructed in Taoist wisdom.' Of course, there is no way of proving whether this is true or not.

We turned further west to descend to Huangcheng (Dry Moat). This place turned out to be packed with Taoist priests and devotees, and there was much coming and going of tourists from hall to hall. Quite a few of the priests sitting at booths by the side of the path were telling fortunes or explaining Taoist doctrines. Many people were keen to have their fortune told although — of course — whether you take it seriously or not is another matter....

In the courtyard opposite the main hall, behind an altar, sat the elderly abbot, with several priests by his side. They were performing a ceremony to bless pilgrims, beating out the rhythm on wooden 'fish' — percussion instruments also used by Buddhists — as they chanted, with bells and cymbals as accompaniment. As I listened to their solemn, measured voices, the peace and tranquillity of this place crept through me.

1



3

2

I was told that, on festival days and especially at the time of the temple fair which starts on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month (somewhen in May), the mountain is jam-packed with pilgrims. Most of them come from the ten surrounding counties in Shaanxi, Gansu and Ningxia. The fair lasts for almost forty days, and tens of thousands flock here every day.

Still further west, behind Huangcheng, lies Leisheng (Thunder) Peak, surrounded by deep chasms on three sides. This is the romantic location of Baxian Qingshou (Eight Immortals' Birthday Celebration) Hall. In the small hall the eight immortals sit, four on either side of the altar, with the Taoist gods of happiness, good fortune and longevity in the centre.

As we left the hall, a crescent moon was rising. At a distance we could see the silhouette of the Lingkong Pagoda standing out against the purple clouds of evening ... adding a touch of extra beauty to the special ambience of Mount Kongtong.

Translated by He Fei

4

The mountain's mystery intensifies at dusk (1, by Qiu Xiaoming). A Taoist nun at home (2). The Baxian Qingshou Hall (3, by Wan Honghai) and a ceremonial bell (4).

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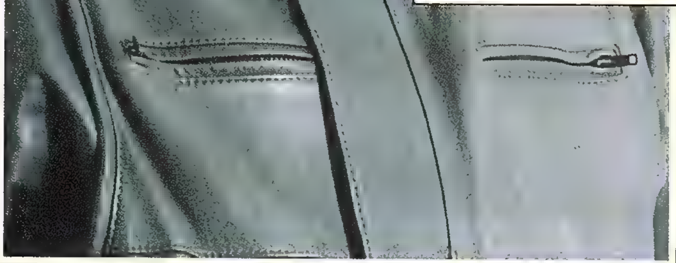

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1

A Canal Two Thousand Years Old

ARTICLE BY TAI CHI YIN

2

Fun and games at the head of the Lingqu Canal (1, by Chen Yajiang), which runs through farmlands for much of its course (2, by Zhang Yan).

2

While travelling in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region last September, I took the opportunity to visit one of the oldest canals in the world in Xing'an County, sixty-six kilometres northeast of Guilin. Xing'an is a pleasant market town with around 300,000 inhabitants, but its main attraction for tourists is definitely the Lingqu Canal.

By Order of Emperor Shihuang

Immediately following his annexation of six other kingdoms, in 221 B.C. the 'first emperor', Shihuang of the Qin dynasty, prepared to push southwards to expand his territory into the areas that are now Hunan, Jiangxi, Guangdong and Guangxi. His troops were split into five columns. Those who were sent into the mountains and narrow trails of Guangxi soon ran into trouble. The terrain made it difficult to transport supplies to the front and they suffered heavy losses.

To remedy this situation, the emperor ordered a canal to be dug to link the north-flowing River Xiangjiang and the south-flowing River Lijiang, thereby connecting the river systems of the Yangtse and Zhujiang (Pearl River). Once this had been done, food and ammunition could be shipped from Lake

1

Dongting in Hunan, south of the Yangtse, upstream along the Xiangjiang and via the Lingqu Canal to the River Lijiang, a tributary of the Guijiang, which joins the Xijiang at Wuzhou on the Guangxi-Guangdong border. Emperor Shihuang was able to extend his rule over vast areas of the south as a consequence.

More than two thousand years old, the canal is one of the most ingenious water conservancy projects in the world. A hydraulics expert from Xing'an told me that it is every bit as inventive as the Dujiang Weir near Chengdu in Sichuan, said to have been designed by one Li Bing in 250 B.C. The major difference between the two lies in their purpose. The Dujiang Weir was designed for irrigation, the Lingqu Canal for navigation.

A Dream of Spring Beauty

The Lingqu Canal is more than thirty kilometres long and mostly runs through fields. The section passing through Xing'an is considered to offer the most attractive scenery. I set out on foot along the canalside to Fenshuitang, a place several kilometres from the county town. Although it was only eight o'clock in the morning and still a bit chilly, with a thin layer of mist floating over the canal, both banks were already crowded with people drawing water with buckets of all sizes.

As I walked further east, the houses became fewer but the trees, inversely, grew ever more dense, threatening to cover the canal completely. The commonest species appeared to be osmanthus and oleander. I was told that in the early spring, when the oleander blossoms fall, they produce a carpet of pink along both banks and over the canal surface. This spectacle attracts many tourists to the canal at this time.

Many bridges – the Wanli, Canglang, Masi, Lijia, etc. – cross the Lingqu Canal, all of them at least a hundred years old. Wanli Bridge, for example, is very much older; it was built in the Tang dynasty between 825 and 827. Its name (literally, Ten Thousand *Li*) comes from the assertion that it was ten thousand *li* (around five thousand kilometres) to the bridge from the capital of China in Tang times, Chang'an (present-day Xi'an in Shaanxi). Since these bridges date from a variety of epochs, they present a plethora of architectural styles and ornamental motifs, reflecting changing tastes through the dynasties.

The Head of the Canal

The best overall view of the head of the canal is from the hill at Fenshuitang. The main structures here are known as the 'Mouth of the Plough' and the 'Big and Small Balance'. The first-mentioned is actually a triangular weir on the River Xiangjiang. The

The ingenious 'Mouth of the Plough' at Fenshuitang (1, by Chen Yajiang). The canal serves residents for many things, including drinking water (2, by Sheng Yongjiu), but it also offers scenic delights for tourists (3, by Zhang Yan).

3

1

water running into the weir is divided so that thirty percent of the water is diverted west into the man-made canal, while the remaining seventy percent flows back into the river and continues on its northward course. There is a little park at the 'Mouth of the Plough' with a picturesque pavilion containing a stone tablet ten metres square. It is inscribed with characters meaning 'division of Xiang and Li'.

Behind the weir is a dam built in the shape of the Chinese character for 'man' – 人. The northern end of the dam, 'Big Balance', is four hundred metres long, the southern part, 'Small Balance,' one hundred metres long. Thence the more common general name of 'Big and Small Balance.' Its purpose is to dam the River Xiangjiang to provide run-off for the canal, while at the same time draining off surplus water to prevent the canal from flooding. Thanks to its solid structure the dam has stood firm for over two thousand years. A famous Song-dynasty poet, Fan Chengda, once exclaimed: 'No other water conservancy project can equal the Lingqu Canal in ingenuity!'

About five hundred metres away there is a two-storeyed whitewashed building on the north bank of the canal. This is the Sixian (Four Prominent Personages) Temple. It was built in 1355 in the Yuan dynasty in memory of Shi Lu of the Qin dynasty, who directed the excavation of the canal, and Ma Yuan of the Eastern Han and Li Bo and Yu Mengwei of the Tang dynasty who supervised three renovations. The temple contains statues of these four as well as six stone steles which relate the history of the excavation of the Lingqu Canal. The most recent renovation of the canal took place in 1979.

2

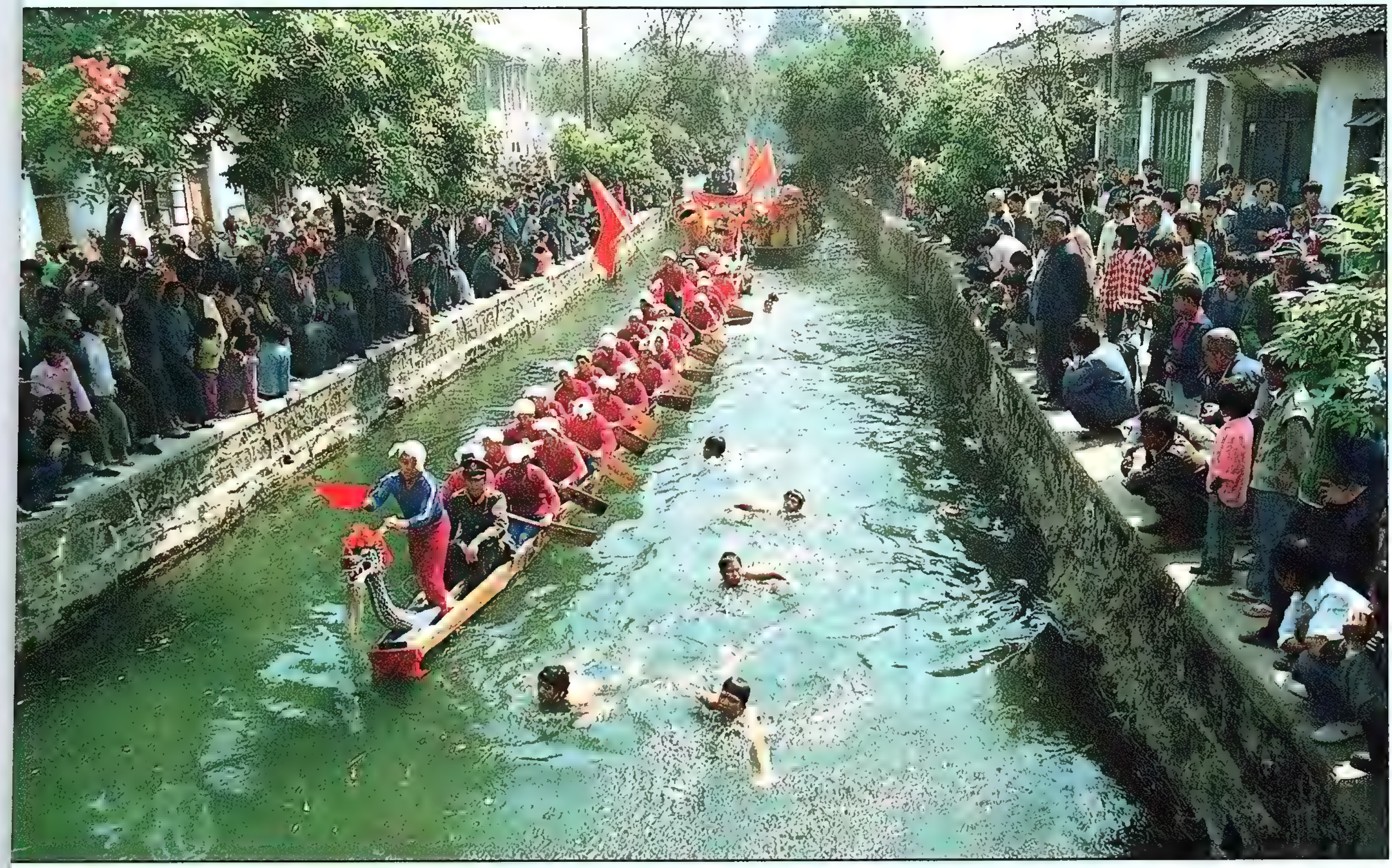
Part of Everyday Life

The busy scenes along the canal in the past when it was one of the major links by water between north and south are now just a memory. But the daily life of local residents is still intimately linked with it. Those living along its banks use it as a means of transport, and it is fun to take a boat-ride on the slow-flowing waters shaded by willows an oleanders.

But the canal has other functions. irrigates more than two thousand hectare of farmland. The huge wooden waterwheel which can be seen in operation on th outskirts of Xing'an are said to have been i use for a thousand years already. The loca people also use the canal as a place to wasl vegetables, clothes, farm tools and bicycles One old man told me that even the loca drinking water comes from the canal. T prevent pollution, the canal is reserved solel for drawing drinking water in the earl morning. People needing water for othe purposes must wait until after nine o'clock And of course we should not forget its function as a playground for the children What fun to be able to jump into the cana and cool off in the summer!

As I was walking back to Xing'an, suddenly heard the sound of drums and gongs and noticed people crowding to the canalside. I finally found a vantage spot from which I watched a convoy of boats advancing slowly along the canal. Apparently, sixty members of the United Guangdong and Guangxi Boating Team were setting out on a grand undertaking that very day. In thirteen boats they intended to travel along the Lingqu Canal and the rivers Lijiang and Guijiang to Wuzhou, and thence along the Xijiang to Guangzhou in Guangdong, a grand total of 690 kilometres.

Leading the procession was a dragon boat about ten metres long. All the rowers were dressed in red and wore a white towel wrapped round their head as a turban.



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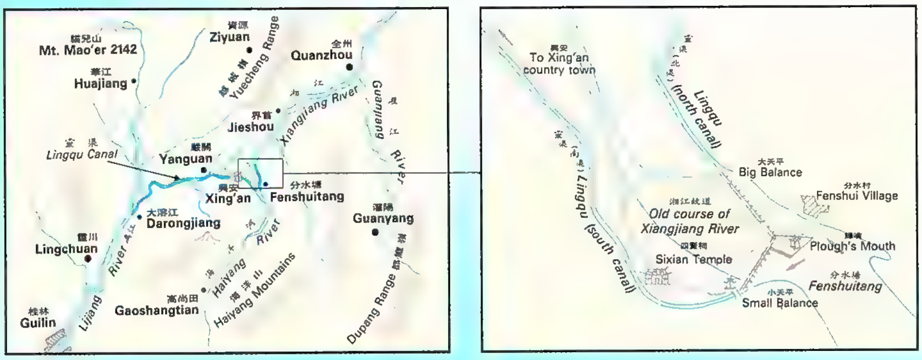
Dozens of children swam alongside the dragon boat as an escort. Immediately after the dragon boat came a barge bearing four 'northern lions'. The lions performed as lively a dance as they could in the cramped space, making the barge tip to left and right. The thirteen vessels conveying the team members brought up the rear.

Dragon boat races are held annually at the time of the Dragon Boat Festival, that is, on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, at Fenshuitang at the head of the Lingqu Canal. But this was such a special occasion that the dragon boat had been brought out to wish the participants good luck and a safe passage.

Translated by Yu Zai Xin

Many exquisitely carved bridges span the Lingqu Canal (1, by Tai Chi Yin). From the local dragon boat 'stable' (4) comes one to provide an auspicious send-off (3) (3 and 4 by Guan Jianzhong), complete with young drummers (2, by Zhang Yan).



Echoes from the Recent Past: The Huangpu Military Academ

PHOTOS BY LAM KIN FAI
ARTICLE BY CHENG CHENG

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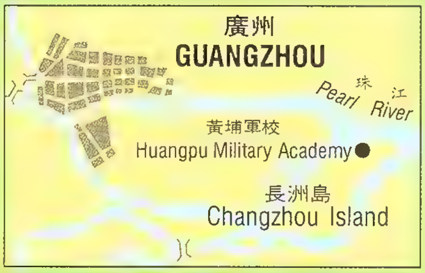

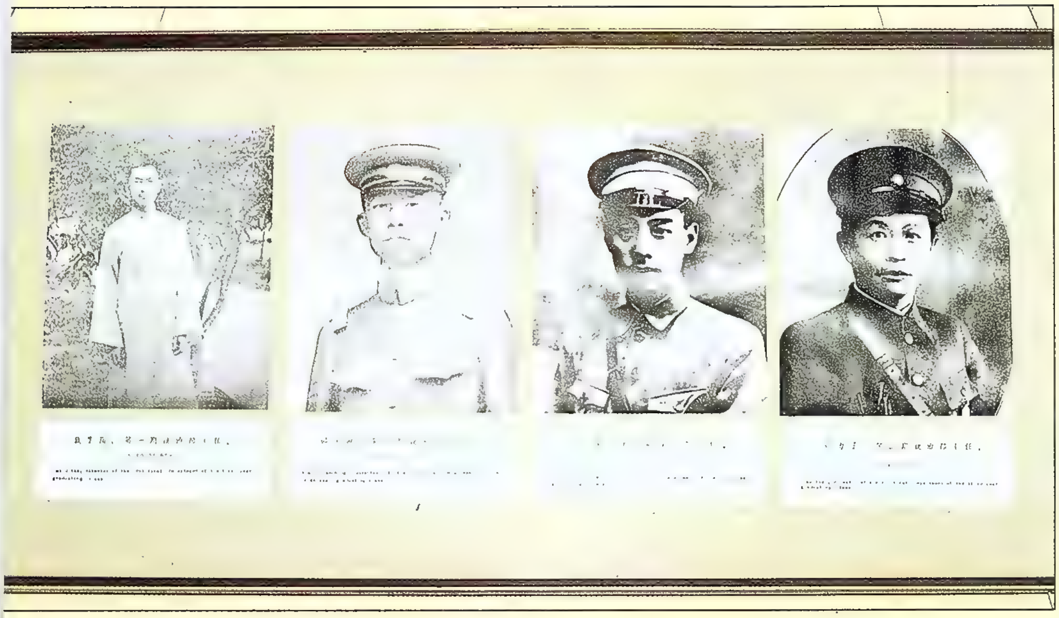
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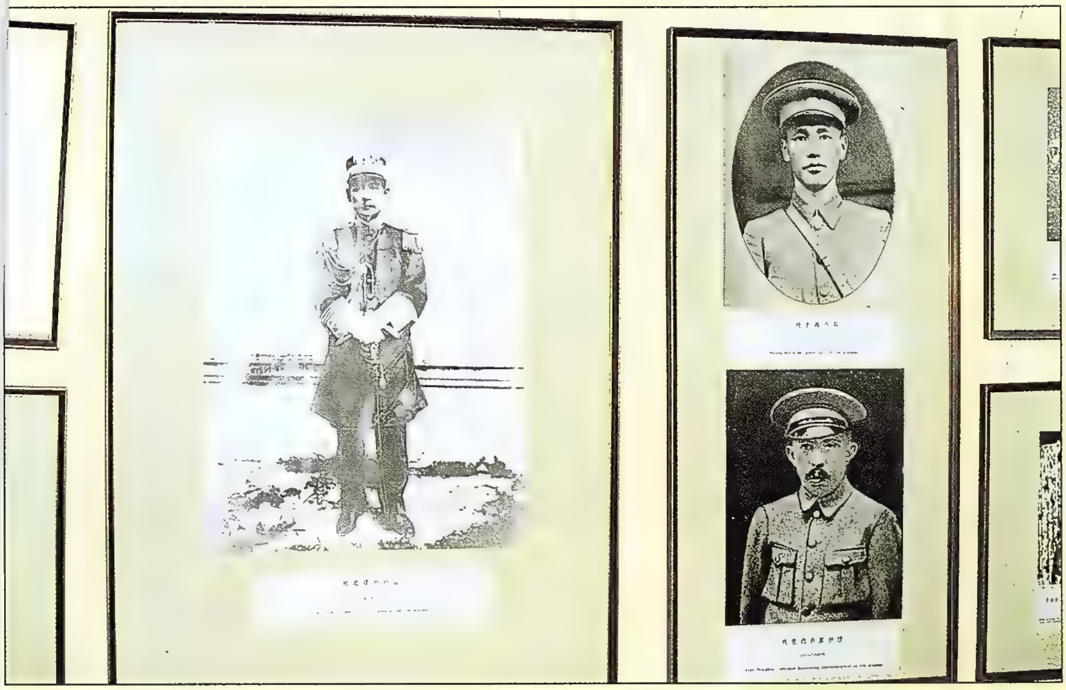
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In the United States, the mention of a military academy immediately brings to mind West Point, while the British equivalent is Sandhurst. In China, the Huangpu Military Academy has the same sort of cachet, especially for those of the older generation.

Although the academy no longer exists as such, it is attracting an increasing amount of attention for a number of reasons. Visitors from Taiwan, in particular, with the new slackening of travel restrictions, are interested in seeing a place so closely associated with important figures of modern Chinese history such as Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek.

The original name, 'Army Officers Academy', greets visitors at the campus entrance (1); the academy's banner (6). A former student remembers (2), and a navy band gives a ceremonial send-off at the quayside (3). Directors of the political department, with Zhou Enlai second from right (4). The academy's leading figures at the outset: Sun Yat-sen (left), Chiang Kai-shek (top right), Liao Zhongkai (bottom right) (5) (4, 5 and 6 by Peng Zhenge).

Founded by Sun Yat-sen

The remains of the academy campus are to be found twenty kilometres east of Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province, in the vicinity of the port of Huangpu (Whampoa) on the north bank of the Zhujiang (Pearl River). You have to take a fifteen-minute ferry ride downstream from Yuzhu to Changzhou Island, where the academy is situated.

The establishment of the military academy in May 1924 on the basis of Guangzhou's Military Primary School and Naval School has to be viewed within the overall context of the times. By this date Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), who in 1911 had been proclaimed 'Father of the Revolution' and named provisional first president of the new republic, had seen the country reduced to political and economic chaos as revolutionary factions and opportunistic warlords battled for power. He had been forced to withdraw from the north and, after periods in Japan and Shanghai, had retreated to Guangdong, his birthplace (he was actually born in Cuiheng, about thirty kilometres north of Macau). He himself had founded the Kuomintang (Nationalist) Party, and this period also saw the rise of the Chinese Communist Party (founded in 1921 in Shanghai). One of its members was the later leading statesman Zhou Enlai (1898-1976), who became an early director of the Huangpu Military Academy's political department.

This first period of cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party culminated in the recognition that, to retake the north, a united army was required. It was with this in mind that the Huangpu Military Academy was founded — to build up the officer corps of this new army, training both Kuomintang and Communist youths. At the start, the academy was called the 'Army Officers Academy', later changed to the 'Central Military and Political Academy'. But since it was located at Guangzhou's famous anchorage at Huangpu, it was inevitable that it came to be known simply as the 'Huangpu Military Academy'.

Once off the ferry, you pass through an archway in the walls, the site of the original entrance gate. The structures here have undergone many changes since 1924. The worst damage was inflicted during the period of Japanese aggression against China (1938-1945), when the academy was bombed and set on fire. Apparently, it was singled out because the Japanese troops thought there might be military secrets hidden here. The rows of terraced houses, students' dormitories, surrounding the basketball court a little further on date from the later part of that period.

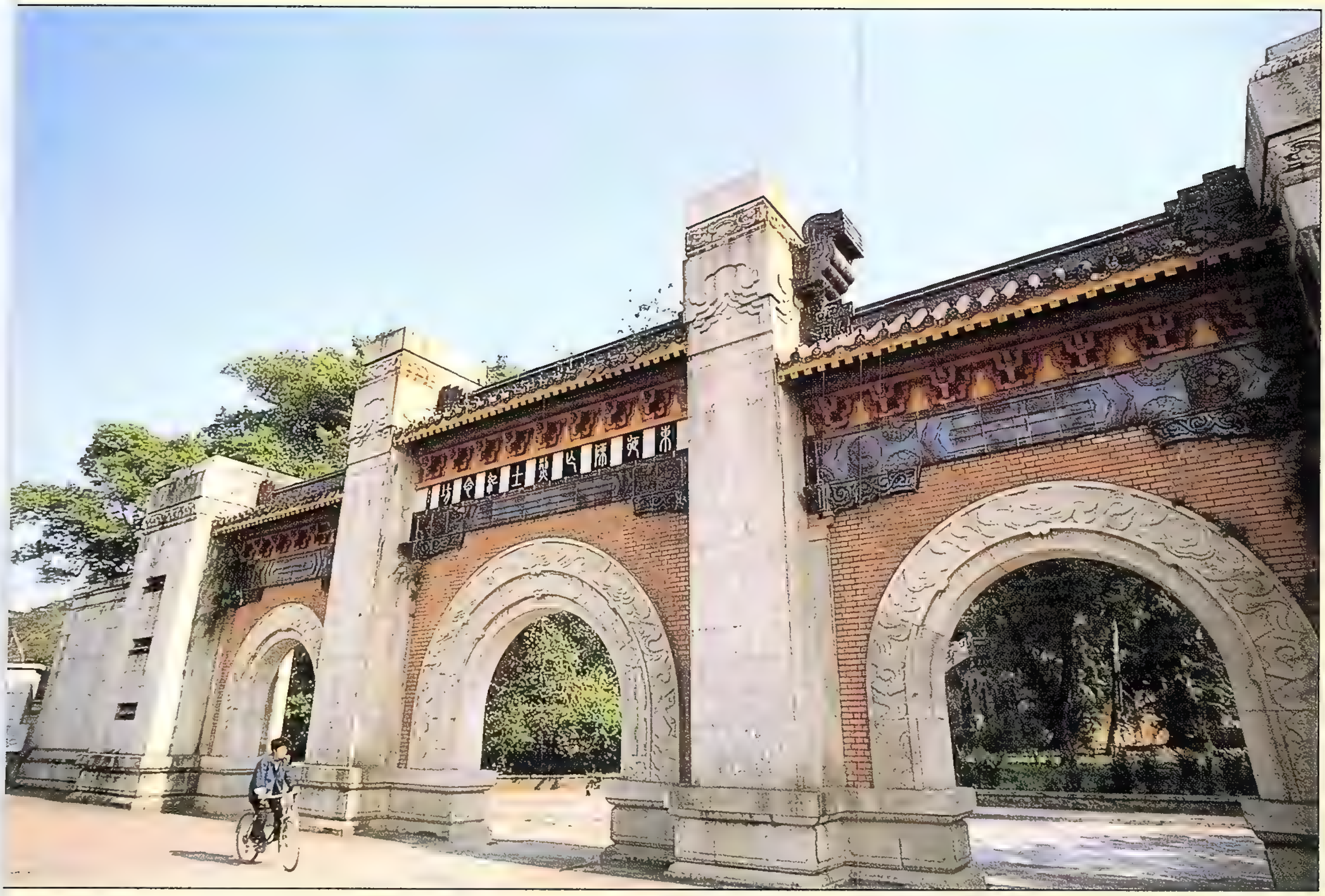
Continuing along the tree-lined path, you come to a second entrance with a vertical signboard bearing the characters 'Memorial Hall of Huangpu Military Academy'. The hall itself is a two-storeyed building of brick and wood which is one of the few original structures still standing. Facing the river and surrounded by trees, this was the home of Dr Sun Yat-sen during the academy's early days. In fact his association with the academy turned out to be of short duration since a sudden shift in the situation in Beijing in October 1924 persuaded him to go there to try to come to an understanding with the 'Christian general' Feng Yuxiang. Sun Yat-sen died of cancer in Beijing in March 1925.

Yet this memorial hall provides valuable evidence of history. Off the corridor on the first floor there are five or six rooms, one of them Sun Yat-sen's bedroom; it has been restored to how it would have looked at the time. Another of the rooms, his former office, has been laid out as an exhibition gallery. It contains many statues and portraits of Sun Yat-sen himself, Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975), who served as the academy's president, Zhou Enlai and Liao Zhongk (1877-1925), another of the early revolutionaries, a Kuomintang Leftist, wh was governor of Guangdong for a while.

Martyrs of the Eastern Expeditions

The campus of the military academy contains many other historic: reminders. At the top of a hill not far from the memorial hall there is a monumer to Sun Yat-sen; at least twenty metres high, it is surmounted by a huge bronz statue of the academy's founder. The four sides of the monument are carve with inscriptions, one of which consists of the text of the speech made b Dr Sun at the academy's inauguration ceremony.

If you then follow a path along the shore past a club and a swimming poo you come to an archway bearing the inscription 'Memorial Archway to th Martyrs of the Eastern Expeditions'. The archway is roofed with glazed tile and the characters are carved in the ancient seal style. The arches are outline with traditional Chinese cloud patterns in bas-relief.



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Behind this archway a stone staircase winds up to the cemetery for the instructors and cadets of the academy who lost their lives during the course of the so-called Eastern Expeditions. In the early 1920s, the warlord Chen Jiongming (1875-1933) was entrenched along the River Dongjiang further to the east in Guangdong. In December 1924, taking advantage of Sun Yat-sen's departure for the north, Chen prepared to launch an attack against Guangzhou. However, Chiang Kai-shek led the National Revolutionary Army based on the officers and cadets of the military academy, together with the Guangdong Army led by Xu Chongzhi, in a pre-emptive strike, taking Shilong and Haifeng. In March 1925 the allies reached Huizhou and finally succeeded in driving Chen Jiongming's troops into southern Fujian. This was the first Eastern Expedition. The second followed later that same year, in September, when a follow-up campaign proved necessary to mop up the forces Chen had managed to reorganize for a repeated attempt against Guangzhou.

The martyrs' cemetery is fronted by a small pavilion housing a commemorative stele. Beyond that again stands another triple arch, with the names of the martyrs inscribed under the central arch.

The only other point of interest in the locality can be found beyond the Huangpu Naval Shipyard. This is the old Xiuhai Pavilion, now in a sadly dilapidated condition. Its main claim to fame is the fact that this was where Dr Sun Yat-sen fled aboard the warship 'Yongfeng', where he stayed for two months, at the height of an earlier conflict with the warlord Chen Jiongming in 1921. It is said that it was this episode which made it clear to Sun Yat-sen that the warlords and their private armies could not be trusted and that a genuine revolutionary armed force must be created without delay — leading, within a few years, to the establishment of the Huangpu Military Academy.

And certainly, over the years of turmoil, the officers produced by the academy made great contributions. In July 1926 the National Revolutionary Army, numbering 85,000 men and 6,000 officers — graduates from the military academy — was finally ready to attempt the Northern Expedition of which Sun Yat-sen had long dreamed. By February-March 1927 they had occupied the whole of the lower Yangtse area. In April 1927 Chiang Kai-shek established an interim nationalist regime at Nanjing, and the revolution entered upon another phase of the struggle which would culminate in the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

Translated by Gu Weizhou

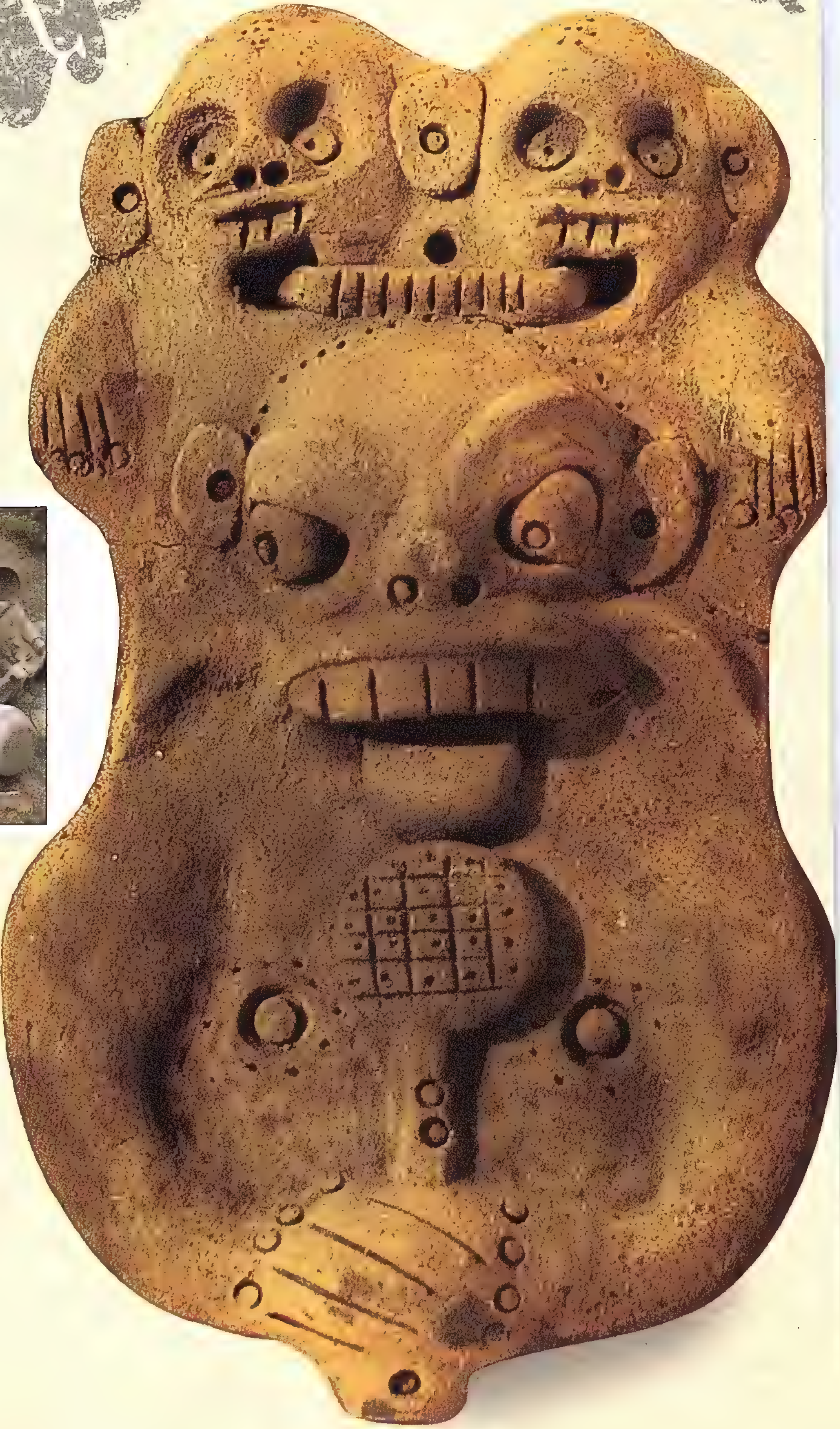
Sun Yat-sen's bedroom as it was in the early days (1) and the monument in his honour (3, by Peng Zhenge). The cemetery to the martyrs of the Eastern Expeditions (2) and their memorial archway (4). Visitors are ferried across the river on a military vessel (5).

Mysterious Black

PHOTOS BY HUANG SIFANG
TEXT BY XIA FENG

The black pottery masks shown here, also known as 'spirit faces' or 'ghost faces', are commonly found in some rural areas of Yunnan Province in southwestern China.

They are primarily intended for use in connection with funerary rites. When someone dies, a mask of this type is carried to the graveyard along with the coffin containing the body of the deceased. Once the coffin has been lowered into the ground, the mask is taken back to the family home and hung on the lintel at the entrance. The



Pottery Masks Of Yunnan

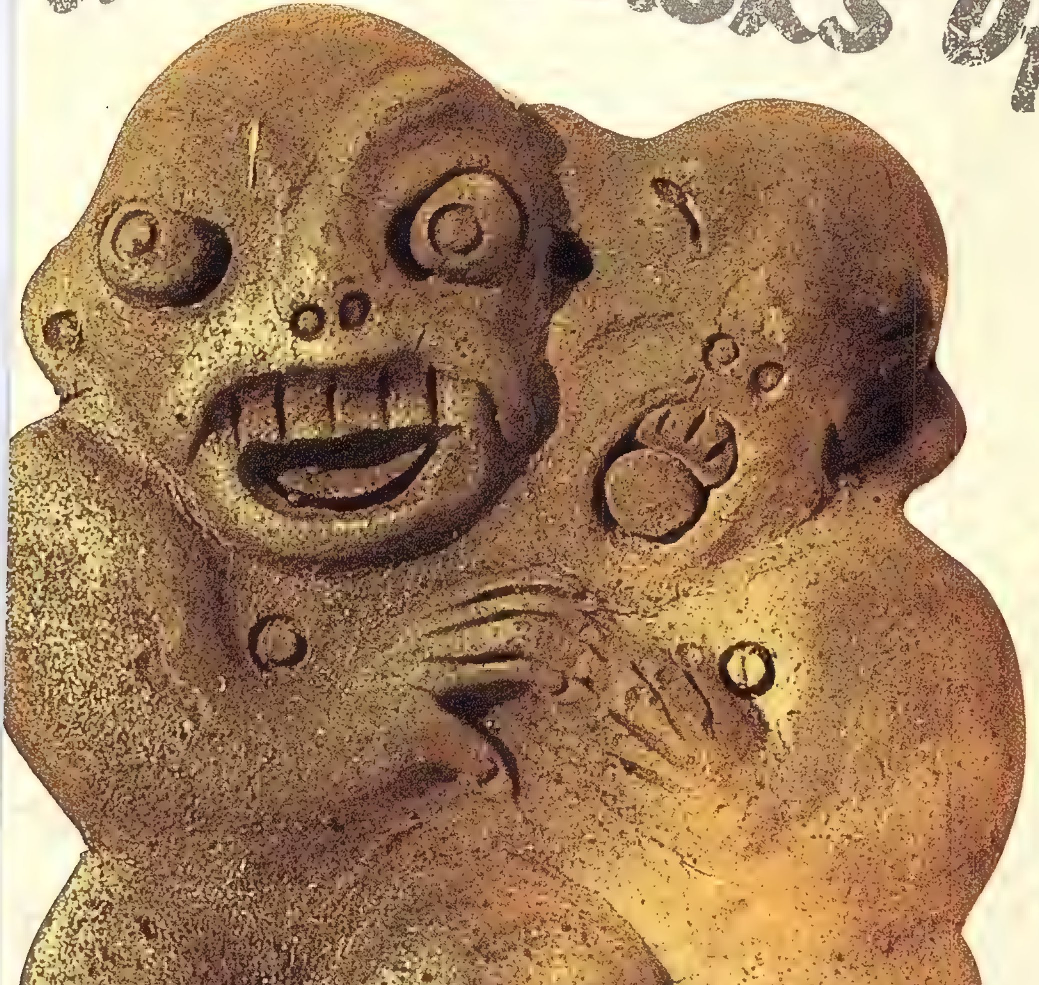


Photo by Mao Baige

villagers believe that this will repel evil spirits and keep the household safe. It is also possible that it is intended to deter the deceased from returning, or to protect the latter's spirit in its rather fragile state as it starts its voyage into the other world.

Created by imaginative craftsmen, the pieces are made from ordinary local clay. First a roll of clay in the general shape is pressed flat and trimmed, then a relief effect is produced by moulding and kneading on additional strips and balls of clay with the fingers. Sharp tools are used for the design details and for definition. The masks do not need to be fired at a high temperature. They are simply baked over an open coal or charcoal fire, the naturally dark clay turning black in the process.

Although the masks seem to be based on primitive religious beliefs, they contain elements of Taoism. This explains the frequency with which we find Taoist images such as the *yin-yang* – rather like the sign for Pisces – denoting the prime opposites (light and dark, male and female, etc.) which make up all things in the universe. In most cases, this symbol is found in combination with Eight Trigrams ideographs as a *bagua*, commonly used to avert evil.

Other motifs betray a preoccupation with open mouths, often equipped with a fearsome set of teeth, as well as with phallic and fertility symbols. Another recurrent theme is of two or more faces, sometimes superimposed on a major 'face', sometimes intertwined like Siamese twins. The possible interpretations are endless....

Translated by M.K.

With their confusingly mingled features and their deep symbolism, the masks project an aura of the eerie, the disquieting. They conjure up images of local folk rituals, of ancient religious practices of which we unfortunately know little today.

Photographer: MOK PAK KUEN

Covering an area of 4,500 square kilometres, Lake Qinghai in the province of the same name is China's largest salt lake. The narrow strip in the foreground is the best known of the lake's five islands. Dubbed Bird Island, this is where thousands of north-bound migratory birds of around twenty species congregate in spring.

The river snakes between desert and the Gobi in Xinjiang, creating oases as it goes. With China's two largest deserts, the Taklimakan and the Gurbantünggüt, located in the region, Xinjiang's oases occupy about three percent of the region yet house over ninety percent of its population.

The Kunlun Range, with its snow-covered peaks and glaciers, begins in eastern Pamir Plateau and extends across Xinjiang and Tibet into Qinghai. Seen from the sky, even its snow peaks rising over six thousand metres (the mountains' average height) look relatively tame and flat.

Northwest China, where the ancient Silk Road began, is a land of deserts and mountains. Its rivers and lakes are therefore the main source of life. These pictures of the vast northwest were taken from the plane en route from Hong Kong to Xinjiang's Urümqi.

Zhan
Explores the

DRAWING

This is the story of Zhang Qian (?–
B.C.) of the Western Han dynasty.
was a government official responsible
receiving state guests in the Han cap
Chang'an (present-day Xi'an in Shaa
Province). But in 139 B.C. Emperor Wu
(reign dates 141–87 B.C.) sent him as
envoy to the Dayuezhi who lived in Ili Riv
valley in today's western Xinjiang, hoping
cement an alliance with them against t
aggressive Xiongnu (Huns) who roamed t
vast deserts beyond.

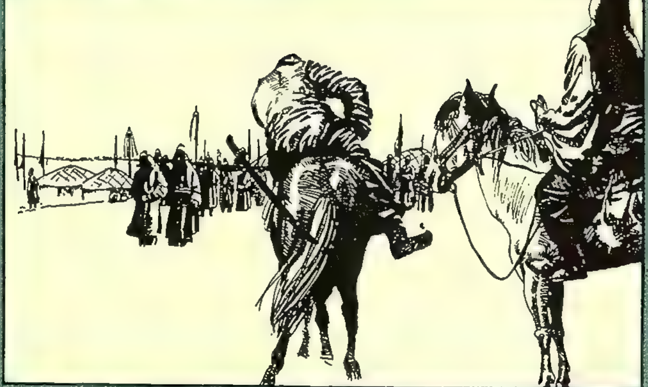
Taking over one hundred people with hi
on this earliest authentically recorded expl
ration to the Western Regions, Zhang Qia
travelled from the Han capital to what is no
Gansu's Longxi County and via the Gans
Corridor and across Xinjiang. His trave
took him to the Ferghana Basin in easte
Uzbekistan, the area between Lake Balkas
and the Aral Sea in southern Kazakhstan an
through the territories of what are now Ira

1 *Emperor Wudi on one of his frequent campaigns against the Xiongnu*

2 *Zhang Qian agrees to venture into the unknown to seek out the Dayuezhi, potential allies against the Xiongnu*

3 *He is taken prisoner by the Xiongnu on his passage through the Gansu Corridor*

4 *Held captive in the far north for eleven years, Zhang Qian marries a local woman who bears him children*



5 *Zhang Qian finally escapes and reaches the State of Dayuan in the Ferghana Basin*

ian
stern Regions

HANGHUA

q, Afghanistan and India. But he was ptured and held prisoner by the Xiongnu eleven years, and it was thirteen years fore he returned to Chang'an in 126 B.C.

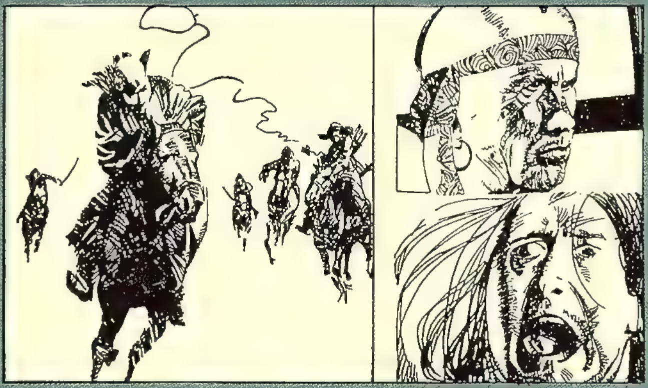
In 119 B.C. he was again chosen as the estern Han emissary and set out on a cond journey, this time to the Wusun who ere settled in the valley of the River Ili and ound Lake Issyk-Kul (now in the Soviet nion). Once there, he sent out deputies to ake contact with the surrounding states d bring back envoys.

Zhang Qian died shortly after his return ome in 114 B.C. His expeditions contributed ormously to the forging of links with djoining regions in Central Asia and in preading the influence of the Han empire, hich was Emperor Wudi's intention.

ranslated by M.K.

aken from *Vol. 3: The Qin and Han Periods* from e 'Stories of Chinese People' series published by e Chongqing Publishing House

6 He requests the king of Dayuan for an escort to the lands of Dayuezhi



7 In 128 B.C. he again falls into Xiongnu hands on his way back to Chang'an but escapes during a power struggle

8 Zhang makes a lengthy report to Emperor Wudi concerning all the events of his journey

9 In 119 B.C. he sets out again with three hundred soldiers and valuable gifts

10 His deputies bring back envoys from many neighbouring states

To Goose Sands by Sheepskin Raft

Written in 1953, the essay presented here springs from Ye Shengtao's own carefully observed experience in Gansu. This follows the general line of his creative writing, in which he confines himself to material for which he has a definite feel and which he understands.

Born in Suzhou in Jiangsu Province in 1894, Ye Shangtao — who died only in 1988 — published his first piece of original writing before he was twenty. In 1921 he was one of the twenty founder members of the Literary Study Society, which demanded that writing should reflect contemporary life and help society progress. He tried to uphold these principles in all his undertakings. In his long and prolific writing career, Ye wrote a great many essays and poems as well as short stories and children's stories, and was an influential literary critic, educator, editor and publisher.

It is twenty years since I first saw a photograph of a sheepskin raft, and I felt, without exactly disbelieving in it as a thing that could get you around on water as wheels could on land, that there was something special, even peculiar about it, particularly as its structure was none too clear to me, all puffed up like a bread-bun. How did one do that with a sheepskin? It was not until I visited Lanzhou last that I saw one with my own eyes, and indeed crossed on one over to Goose Sands, a sandbar in the Yellow River.

The rafts are made of whole skins, and lest this give the false impression of whole skins as they are used for coats or bags, let me hasten to explain that they are not spread out in the same way, being rather comparable to snake skins from which the snakes have crawled off elsewhere, leaving them collapsed on themselves but still snake-shaped. They keep their shapes in the same way, for the men who slaughter the sheep remove the skin from the muscle and skeleton in such a way as to leave only four openings in each, two where the forelegs are severed at the knee, one where the head is removed from the neck, and one large one at the rump where the hind legs are removed in a piece. Three of these are tied up to leave one air hole – for convenience's sake this is of course one of the forelegs – which is itself tied up once the thing has been inflated. It then forms a long air-bag, still perceptibly shaped like a sheep.

Four to six of these, depending on their size, make up a row, and three rows are connected lengthwise into a composite rectangle, which is thus composed of between twelve and sixteen air bags, and on top of this is laid a rectangular wooden frame bound together with rope so as to resemble a character 冊 laid on its side – only vaguely, of course, for it is closed at the bottom where 冊 is not, and has instead of four uprights ten or more, spaced a little closer together than the length of a human foot, so that two offer a firm foothold. It is then complete; there is no more to the construction of a sheepskin raft than this.

The weight of a sheepskin raft, whatever it may be, is obviously not excessive, since the raftmen carry them on their backs supported by a carrying pole, the other end of which they hold in one hand as they move along at a sprightly pace. When they are hired and have agreed on a price, they lower the raft on to the surface at the edge of the river and let the passengers step aboard.

There are also oxhide rafts, though we did not see any, which take heavy loads and have an awning for accommodation as they ply downriver to Ningxia. If these are likened to goods lorries, then the sheepskin rafts are cars taking a few passengers hither and thither in the immediate vicinity.

Our friends explained that the sheepskin rafts were most stable and absolutely secure, despite their seeming peculiarity and lack of anything in common with the boats we were used to. Ours rocked a little as we got aboard, but not as violently as the little rowboats on West Lake. The usual thing is for the passeng to place either foot on one of the cross-stru and squat down braced on his legs. Wi useless legs such as mine, I was reduced t plonking my bottom squarely against the woo and the hide. There were six of us in a including the raftman and an extra passenge carrying flour.

The raft had a shallow enough draught t enable it to come close enough in to the sand to make boarding and disembarking an eas matter and was elastic enough to stretch as it h the rocks without bursting – though one burs bag would not have made much difference wit ten or so others intact. Being the same siz above as it was below, it could under no conditions capsize, simply rising and falling wit the waves in even the most violent weather. W chatted of all this as we went along, perfectl convinced by the explanation of the craft' stability, and reflecting at another level tha there would probably be no such rafts i Lanzhou without the considerable local expenditure on mutton.

The raftman dipped his carrying pole into the yellow stream and rowed unhurriedly, the instrument taking on the additional dual attributes of oar and rudder. Goose Sands lay across our bows, lush and golden in the low sunlight, the very picture of crisp autumn, backed by the mountains that soared up, majestic in their silence, from the opposite bank. Upstream to port and downstream to starboard the water, though at its autumn low, stretched mighty and imposing into the distance. So insignificant was the raft beneath us that we were forced to ignore it, so that we felt we were yet closer to nature, floating on the surface of the water, our breathing at one with the flow of the Yellow River, the silence of the serried mountains and the brilliance of the blue sky. I felt as I had years before at Leshan in Sichuan on an outing to Lingyunshan and Wuyoushan in a rowboat riding the immensely broad waves across the Yangtse.

We were at Goose Sands in under ten nutes. The name must have been an apt scription when wild geese used the sandbar the river as a stopping off point in the days fore men arrived. How many verses, I wonder, d how many paintings have been inspired by poetic, picturesque quality of this island ode of the wild geese? I doubt if they use it y more now that it supports all its market-rdening families and its state farm and nursery, it the name is still most evocative.

We went first to the state farm. There was no iit left on the trees, but the table in the hostality room was laid with four large dishes of pples of a size and variety of colour to dazzle e eye. These, we were told by one of the mrades who received us, were four of the any varieties grown on the farm. They were ored, he said, in cellars, but in insufficient iantity for general distribution, one of the farm's ms being the dissemination of finer varieties in e Lanzhou area, with its existing reputation for uit and even brighter prospects with selection nd grading. He offered us apples as he spoke, nd one by one we tried each kind.

The largest, named "Generalissimo", preumably from its size, was red and green, right red and emerald, sweet and delicate on e tongue. The next, "India", was all green, ery crisp and quite delicious. The third, Green Banana", all green like the "India" but omewhat paler, tasted of bananas. The fourth vas "Jade Sunset" with a yellow skin the olour of half ripe bananas and an excellent lavour too. It was as hard to judge between hem as it was to recall ever having eaten pples so good: the very first taste of this prime ruit made the trip worthwhile.

Tasting such good apples took my mind back to the apples I had eaten as a boy, forty or fifty years before. Apples arrived in the Suzhou fruit shops around the middle of autumn in batches of no more than fifty or sixty, their red and green skins marked with rust-yellow scars and no larger than a copper. There was no such thing as distinctions of variety; one knew only that they were Tianjin apples brought in from afar along the sea lanes. Knives were not needed to peel them. Most people scored them from stem to base with their thumbnails as if drawing meridians on a globe of the world until when they were done the skin could be torn off. Nibbling at the stripped fruit was exactly like eating steamed buns stuffed with bean paste, for grainy particles were discernible in the soft flesh on the tongue and they made one feel full when they were swallowed. I imagined when I was small that that was the way one was supposed to eat apples, and that apples were unpalatable things that stuck to the tongue, clogged the throat and were not very nice. It was not until I tasted fresh apples in Shanghai that I came to the realization that the virtue of an apple lay in crispness and flavour, of which I had had no inkling. But though over the years I must have eaten a fair amount of apples, I don't think any excelled those I had that day on Goose Sands.

As for the melons of Goose Sands, we ate none, but I have had them elsewhere. It would be a shame to pass in silence over the wonderful Lanzhou melons, by which I mean the type of muskmelon known as the Sweet Green-pith. Muskmelons differ from watermelons chiefly in having a sharp division between the pith and the flesh, which in watermelons run into one another with no distinct boundary. Whereas we eat the pith of the watermelon, with the muskmelon it is not the pith but the flesh that is eaten, as is too generally known to need detailed description. Common varieties of muskmelon, such as the Golden and the Jadeite, are delicately scented but not awfully sweet, some not at all, and while we like an occasional taste of them when they are in season, they could scarcely be called an addiction. Luzhi, where I lived for many years, thirty-six *li* from Suzhou, produces an apple-melon, shaped like an apple and the size of a small rice-bowl, with dark green skin and lighter green flesh, sweeter than the ordinary Golden and esteemed around Suzhou, though not really more than that. The Sweet Green-pith of Lanzhou is also rather like an apple and about the size of a child's football, with an ugly yellowish-white skin, its beauty only appearing when it is cut open to reveal flesh as delicately green as the finest jadeite. When bitten into, the tender green flesh is juicy and deliciously sweet, and chewed lightly goes so smoothly down the throat that it seems insubstantial. The sweet, pervading refreshment that comes after one or two pieces can truly be called a supreme enjoyment. These melons store well and make an ingenious New Year's delight when brought out at Spring Festival. They are apparently not native to Lanzhou, having been only recently introduced from the Ukraine.

The Hami melons must be mentioned too. They are sold, among other things, by a concentration of Muslim families who deal in Xinjiang goods on one corner of Lanzhou market. Also of the muskmelon family, they are shaped like rugby balls and of comparable size. Their skin is dark green and rough, with discontinuous cracks. When opened, they have light yellow, or perhaps pink flesh not unlike that of a pumpkin. Their sweetness is a little heavier than that of the Sweet Green-pith, lacking the latter's freshness and juiciness. They have always been famous, and the vast majority of people have heard of them, even if they do not know what they are like. With the recent expansion of communications and a railway network joined up like a spider's web, as well as attention given to cultivation and improvements in production, I see no reason why Hami melons and Lanzhou's Sweet Green-piths and Generalissimos and the like should not in the future reach fruiterers everywhere and become household expressions on a par with Guangdong bananas and Tiantai oranges.

But I digress and will return to Goose Sands. After our fruit we went out to have a look around. All about us were apple trees, pear trees and peach trees, densely interplanted with white poplar saplings, of which one could see only the parallel, straight trunks. Scholartrees extended their feathery leaves from beside the sandy road, and weeping willows drooped motionless leaves that showed no sign of thinning, although autumn was well advanced. All that could be heard in the surrounding solitude was the quiet sound of the Yellow River's current.

This Goose Sands is a popular resort with Lanzhou people, especially in summer, when workpeople come out to while away the hours of their free days beneath the surrounding trees that offer shade morning and afternoon alike, or else to sit and lie in comfort on the beach. Students on their summer holidays regard the place almost as a second school, where they can converge to read, play and hold meetings more congenially than in regular schooltime. Goose Sands is the coolest spot in a city which is never all that hot in summer, a place where to watch the stark, solemn hills, the swelling expanse of the Yellow River and the light and colour changing upon them with the advance of the day and the vagaries of the weather, is no less than to bathe the spirit in refreshment and profundity.

Construction is proceeding quite according to plan in urban Lanzhou, which is on the way to becoming, with the wholehearted help of its Soviet experts, a modern industrial city without obliterating the advantages it already possesses. If the planners consider how best to beautify Goose Sands and fit it to the physical and mental health requirements of the people of Lanzhou, they will, I think, have made the right decision, and I shall look forward keenly to visiting it again in a few years' time.

A number of peasants were carrying full loads of flowers and vegetables down to the river to board sheepskin rafts, hurrying their freshly cut produce into Lanzhou, where it would be on the morning market "still breathing".

And as evening fell on the hills, the woods, the Yellow River and the tips of our eyebrows, we too stepped aboard our sheepskin raft.

Translated by Simon Johnstone

Taken from the collection entitled *How Mr Pan Weathered the Storm* and reproduced by kind permission of Panda Books, Chinese Literature Press, Beijing

Chinese Baby Carriers

Carrying a baby, or sometimes two (!) on the mother's back has been the custom for centuries in China. For any mother who must, by necessity, work in the fields, on the boat, or round the home, a baby carrier is a safe place to keep a small child out of harm's way, as well as being a convenient mode of transportation. Like many traditions it is one which is fast disappearing in the face of modernisation and Western influences. But it is still possible, in parts of Hong Kong and especially the rural areas of the New Territories, to see some of the traditional styles of baby carriers which are in themselves fine works of folk art containing many symbolic meanings.

A baby carrier is made from a square of cloth often decorated with embroidery, with four long strips of fabric extending from each corner of the square to form straps. Once the child and carrier are in place on the mother's back, two straps are brought over her shoulders and two more come under the arms to tie in a knot in front. At the centre top of the square is a small folded triangular piece of cloth, previously five layers thick, but now normally of only one layer. It is considered to be a lucky charm and originally symbolized the five blessings: wealth, health, happiness, long life and a right to a natural death. In addition, it is a wish for many children. There is also a superstition which says that the carrier must never be used the wrong side out, unless one parent is dead, and then it must be worn that way.

In the past it was the custom for the grandmother to provide the carrier when the child was one month old. Of the four main ethnic groups in Hong Kong, the Punti, or locally born Cantonese, and the Hakka women nowadays usually purchase them from a shop or market stall, though the Hoklo and the Tanka women still make their own. These two groups of people belong to the fishing community and tend to retain their old traditions longer than land-dwellers.

The shapes of the carriers fall into three main types. The first, commonly seen in the urban areas of Hong Kong and popular with the Punti and Hakka women, has a decorated centre square with straps which are a continuation of the top and bottom edges. Earlier baby carriers of the same style, dating back to the beginning of this century, were much larger than the ones of today. An interesting feature of those was that the end of one or both of the lower straps had the corners folded to the centre to form a small pocket in which to carry coins.

A second style more often seen in the rural areas of the New Territories has a slightly smaller centre piece with longer straps fixed diagonally to the four corners of the square with much reinforcing stitching at these points. This is the style favoured by the Hoklo and Tanka boat-women.

The third style is the simplest of all, being a plain, undecorated strip of red cotton or hemp, approximately three metres long by thirty centimetres wide. In the past it was the tradition for a bridegroom to wear a strip of red cloth draped across one shoulder of his long gown and tied on the opposite hip. After the wedding day it was then put aside for later use as a baby carrier, by winding the strip of cloth twice round the child and then tying it in a knot in front of the wearer. It is seldom seen today, although some Hoklo women use it as an alternative to the more elaborately decorated kind.

There are many different ways of decorating the centre of the carriers. The Punti and Hakka women choose ones which have a selection of embroidered good luck symbols usually depicting a combination of the following: a pair of mandarin ducks symbolizing marital fidelity; butterflies for conjugal happiness; lotus flowers representing purity and fruitfulness; pomegranates for abundance in all things, especially children; and the Chinese characters for double happiness, long life and good fortune.

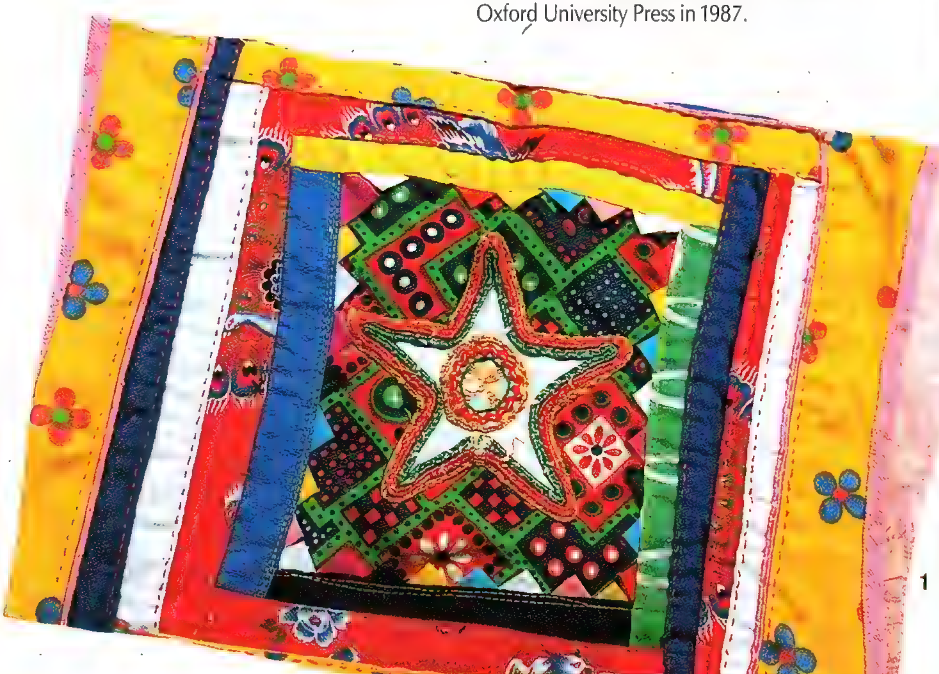
Those carriers made by the Hoklo and Tanka women do not feature embroidery, but instead are made up of many coloured strips and triangles of cotton, appliquéd onto the centre square and continuing up the top straps, so that when worn the decoration is visible at the front as far as the knot. These hand-sewn baby carriers are worked on whenever the woman has some free time on the junk, between cooking a meal or helping the family to fish. Special ones made by the Hoklo women for festivals and celebrations have bells to frighten away evil spirits, as well as tassels, fringing, and beading in all the colours of the rainbow.

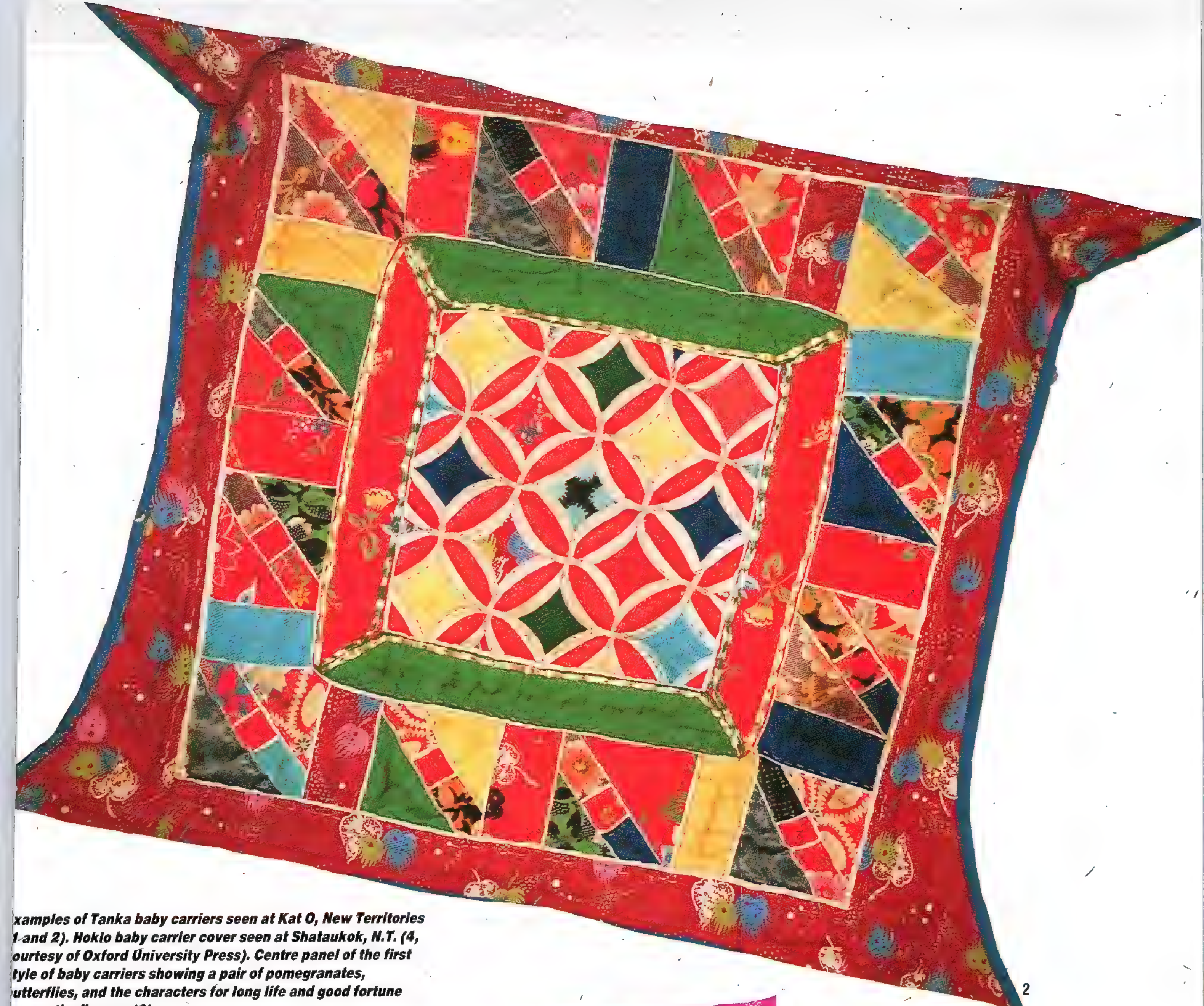
Equally decorative are the baby carrier covers – also made by the Hoklo women – which are used over the baby carrier when the weather is cold, particularly on special occasions. Embellished with embroidery, appliqué, braid, tassels and bells like the carriers, they are real works of art which can take many months to complete.

It is good to know one can still see these colourful examples of a long established tradition. But as Western influences in clothing have almost completely succeeded in changing the style of dress for the Chinese people, one wonders how much longer this particular custom will survive?

Valery M. Garrett

Editor's note: The author developed this article from a chapter on children's clothing in her book *Traditional Chinese Clothing in Hong Kong and South China, 1840-1980,* published by Oxford University Press in 1987.





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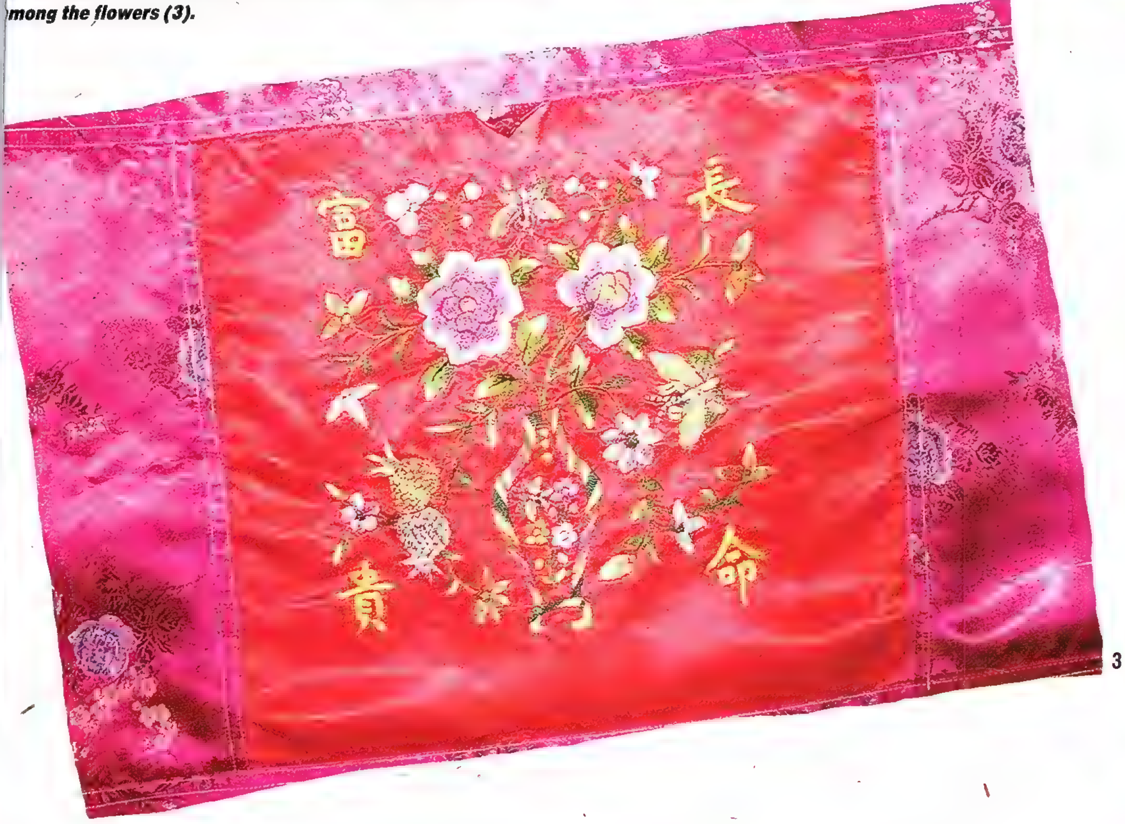
xamples of Tanka baby carriers seen at Kat O, New Territories 1 and 2). Hoklo baby carrier cover seen at Shataukok, N.T. (4, ourtesy of Oxford University Press). Centre panel of the first tyle of baby carriers showing a pair of pomegranates, utterflies, and the characters for long life and good fortune mong the flowers (3).



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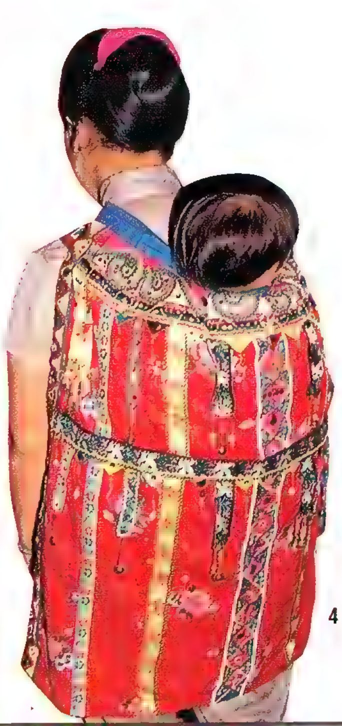


4

TRAVELLERS' CORNER

To the Sacred Mountain of the Tibetan Nomads

The road turns and twists its way over bare brown mountain ridges to the top. Endlessly, metre by metre, using the lowest gear of my mountain bike, I gain altitude. The thin air, to which my body has not yet adapted, forces me to move in almost slow motion. A last hill and I reach the top of the pass at 3,452 metres. This is the Riyue (Sun Moon) Pass in Qinghai Province.

From a pile of stones hundreds of coloured prayer flags rise into the sky, floating in the wind and signalling my entry into another land; one whose residents use their energies less for exploring the outer world than the inner, where daily life and religion are not separate, but one.

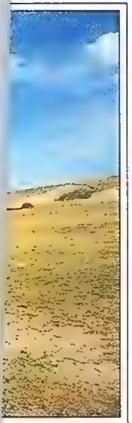
After my companions join me at the top of the pass we continue our journey. An icy wind blows into our faces as we descend. Minute by minute the hastening clouds concentrate above us and finally burst into a wild swirl of snowflakes. Snow already covers the ground. The 'Land of Snow' greets us with the knowledge that even in April the winter still holds sway over t
country. As suddenly as the snowstor
appears it stops, and soon the first sunbea
are peering hesitantly through the clouds.

Daotanghe lies ahead – a shabby litt
village with a few restaurants and a decay
truck stop at the crossing of two importa
roads. While the Qinghai-Tibet Highw
goes west from here along the south shore
Lake Qinghai and then via Golmud to Lhas
we follow the road which leads south int
the A'nyêmaqên region and to the source
of the Huanghe (Yellow River). Daotangh
actually means 'back-flowing river'. Most
China's rivers flow from west to east, but th
is an exception. The name is connecte
with an event in the history of the regio
Legend says that the Chinese princes
Wen Cheng, whom the Tibetan kin
Songtsan Gambo demanded from th
Tang court as his wife, passed this plac
on her way to her new homeland
When she saw the barriers of th
Riyue Mountains which at that tim
separated Tibet from China, she burs
into tears. The god of rain was s
moved, his tears came down t
earth as rain. The princess's tear
mingled with the rain to form
river which followed the wedding
procession as it journeyed west.

A short distance after Daotanghe comes the climb up to another pass, which we cross on our next stage with the bikes. A brief descent, during which we lose little altitude, brings us to extended alpine plains, completely bare of trees, where the meagre grass just prevents a total victory for sand. Moslem minorities breeding goats and sheep and cultivating the soil have settled here. Their small homesteads are found isolated along the path or grouped in hamlets.

In a strongly marked ridge of the valley surrounded by snow-covered mountains we find Gonghe, the last county town on our way to the A'nyêmaqên area. We walk along e wide main road with its monotonous uses, reflecting the sameness of most odern Chinese architecture. At each cross- ads, loudspeakers blare out revolutionary ngs in the morning and at night. On the ide pavements and in front of the owcases in the shops, crowds of Chinese e closely packed. Sometimes you see eople whose skin is rather darker in the owds. Often they wear colourful costumes, aking them seem as exotic as if they were embers of some folklore group. These are betans and they were once the majority ere.

During the following days we cycle rough nomad lands. It is an extraordinary xperience to travel across the Qinghai- bet Plateau on a bicycle instead of being onfined inside a car, and at a speed which lows you to fully appreciate the country- de and its size. There are plains with elicate green grass on which the clouds row their shadows before they touch the ountains on the horizon, whose shapes eem created for eternity. There are chains f brown hills stretching like crests of waves, ehind which mountain tops covered with now tower up against the sky. Sometimes e white cumulus clouds seem so close you eel you could reach up and touch them. On e bare grass of the plains there are black omad tents made of yak hair with sheep, oats and yak spread out around them like rains. We rest beside crystal-clear rivers urrounded by a landscape in which the eye finds peace and no senseless noise disturbs the harmony. Whenever we leave our tents we are watched curiously by marmots sitting in front of their earth burrows; they disappear into them quickly if you go closer. We love walking across the alpine pastures to look for remote nomad camps. We are always greeted most openly and hospitably – if you do not take the dangerous watchdogs into account! These Tibetans have such serenity of spirit, such richness of sincerity, in spite of their material poverty.



During the next days our path leads us across three high passes, the first – the Hankou Pass – at an altitude of a little under 4,000 metres above sea-level, the other two higher. All of them are covered with fresh snow and so we can't use our mountain bikes at the highest passages. We are forced to change to the lorry in which our liaison officer is travelling and which also carries all our mountaineering equipment. With each pass we overcome we are taking another step up to the Tibetan highlands.

The hot springs at Wenquan offer the last bathing opportunity for a long time. From now on, all the water we find is buried deep under ice. Warned by the weather forecast, which predicts heavy snowfall for the following day, we just manage to make it across the northern spurs of the A'nyêmaqên Range. Then the snowstorm erupts, burying the landscape beneath a covering of white. Only the pitch-black tents of the nomads, from which grey smoke rises, form any contrast with the surroundings. Hairy yaks stand there motionless like rocks.

Close to Huashixia, a 'road' branches off and leads directly south. In the raging elements this track is difficult to find. Unexpectedly we meet a herd of wild antelope, shy animals of the Tibetan grassland, which walk parallel to us for some time until they disappear behind a mountain ridge. In late afternoon we reach Xiadawo, the end of our mountain bike tour and the start of our approach on foot to A'nyêmaqên.

One morning seven yaks have gathered in front of our sleeping cells. While we hurry with our breakfast, our Chinese companions start loading the beasts. The maximum load for yaks right now after the hard winter is limited so we have to make do and take only the most important things.

It is a picturesque sight as the yak caravan leaves Xiadawo, walking at a slow pace up the opposite ridge which is deep in snow before disappearing into the never-ending mountains. Tshako, our Tibetan caravan leader, is very good at guiding the yaks. He directs them from behind by means of different whistles. At a steady pace, the caravan moves along under the burning sun which pours its light upon the earth. Sometimes we encounter horsemen who seem to come out of nowhere and are gone again the next moment. Wanderers with the wind, whose tracks are blown away before they themselves have vanished from sight. Almost uninhabited, this immeasurable space lies under the deep blue sky across which clouds sail, looking like plush toys. Here there are no limits for the persistent traveller. One could roam the mountains, valleys, gorges and grasslands a whole lifetime without ever touching upon the same place twice. The presence of human beings and the fact that we are approaching an important place of pilgrimage can be seen from the numerous prayer flags on the hilltops as well as from the stones piled beside our path.

After about seven hours' march we make camp for the night on a snow-free place right in the middle of a frozen riverbed. While Tshako leads his yaks to graze nearby, we decide to climb one of the surrounding hills hoping for a first glimpse of Mount A'nyêmaqên. A hope that is completely fulfilled! Hardly have we climbed more than one hundred metres when, in front of us, a mighty shining white face appears, limiting the horizon to the east. Several summits flooded with the warm light of late afternoon decorate the massif like an indented crown. On Tibetan Buddhist paintings or *thangka*, A'nyêmaqên appears as a god floating on clouds. Now we face his embodiment in ice. The pure, clear light melts the distances and projects the sacred mountain as though it were right in front of us, but we still have a long way to go.

Next day we reach a small pass in the immediate vicinity of which a few nomad families have set up their tents. Following the good Tibetan custom we cross the pass (4,200 metres) before noon and then descend to an expansive river valley. For hours we follow the frozen river to the southeast, initially at the edge of the cliffs which are its banks, later in the river bed itself until the ever-narrowing gorge forces us to switch to the other side. We have been underway for more than seven hours. In our state of exhaustion, progress is slow. Wang, our Chinese liaison officer, is desperate to find a place for our base camp. As threatening dark cloud masses gather above our heads and a storm starts, he declares the next flat spot our base camp and refuses to move another step.

Only with great difficulty, because of the heavy storm, do we manage to erect our

tents. Wang retreats inside one. He is so exhausted that he eats his freeze-dried noodles without dissolving them first in hot water. Tshako pickets the yaks next to our tents, and they lie down instantly. Gunther breaks the thick coat of ice over a nearby creek to get some water; it is so cold that the hole freezes over again almost immediately.

The following day all of us – bar Beatrice – move off again. The yak caravan marches briskly off back down into the valley as Gunther and I start to climb. Shortly above our base camp, after crossing the deep trench of the river bed, we are able to start using our skis. Over shallow basins and ridges we quickly make our way up and, in a wide valley out of which a moraine winds like the body of a huge snake, we find an approach to the western side of Maqên Gangri, Mount A'nyêmaqên. Loaded with food and equipment for a high camp, we ascend the moraine ridge, deep in snow, which leads us right up to the foot of the west face. The snow conditions are not the best. After only a few metres we give up any hopes of an enjoyable downhill run. The snow is either wind-packed and covered with a crust or deep and granular where it is exposed to the sun. The fully loaded rucksacks are heavy and weigh us down, and with this and our lack of acclimatization progress is slow. After we have crossed the 4,500-metre point all the mountains limiting our view drop away. With astonishment we gaze across the ocean of peaks which ripple out to the west like waves; from them Mount A'nyêmaqên towers up to its solitary height of 6,282 metres.Shortly, underneath a glacier basin in which an ice block sits as if catapulted there by the hand of some Cyclops I deposit my rucksack. The altimeter shows 4,800 metres. Gunther decides to climb to the foot of the face and scout around for the best site for our advance camp. I prefer not to describe our descent by skis – a series of jump turns which has nothing to do with real skiing.

The weather proves to be very changeable and forecasting is impossible. Hardly a day passes without a snowfall. Though the volume of snow is not great, the continual storms keep us in base camp for days. At the next break in the weather we make another attempt. This time Beatrice comes too. We take everything with us to build the advance camp and try to reach the summit from there.

On this day I am able to move ahead quickly. After one and a half hours I reach the point where I turned back last time. I continue to break trail in a constant rhythm until, after another hour, I reach an altitude of 5,000 metres. Here I locate an ideal, well-protected place for the advance camp. Half an hour later Beatrice approaches, gasping for air. But where is Gunther? We wait for him in vain. After what seems like an eternity he answers our shouts. He announces that he is not feeling well and wants to go back to base camp. Beatrice goes down to him and, after making sure that he is fit to return to camp on his own, brings up his equipment.

After an unexpectedly mild and calm night at 5,000 metres, we wake to a wonderful day. We look forward to the chance to reach the summit, and keep going. But I decide to avoid the direct route because of a very steep and dangerous-looking hanging glacier and instead attempt another precipitous but apparently less risky face which leads directly up to the wide west ridge. This offers an approach to the main summit via the lower north peak. But soon we are suffering from acclimatization problems and have to turn back. I do not know at this point that I am giving up the only chance A'nyêmaqên will give me. To the astonishment of Gunther, who believes us to be somewhere high up close to the summit, we return to base camp in early afternoon.

Bad weather keeps us in our tents for the next few days. Gunther goes down with a cold and a fever, recovering only slowly. When he is fit again, I catch it. During a fall on an icy patch, I also bruise myself badly, which hinders my breathing. Now it is up to Beatrice and Gunther. We only have two days left until the yak caravan arrives from Xiadawo to collect us.

The weather takes pity and they manage to overcome the steep face leading to the west ridge but are then blocked by a labyrinth of crevasses covered with a thin layer of snow. Unable to cross it and with insufficient time left to find another route, they too are forced to retreat from the altitude of 5,600 metres they have reached a short distance away from the north peak. This too is not without incident. Gunther is caught in an avalanche as he skis down the steep face but manages to extricate himself.

I observe their retreat from the advance camp to which I have climbed with the aim of helping them dismantle the camp and bring down all the equipment. By late afternoon we have finished our breakneck descent through crusted snow with fully packed rucksacks and reach base camp. Wang and Tshako are already waiting for us, having come up from Xiadawo in a forced march of nine hours.

The dawn of the next day ignites the peaks of A'nyêmaqên one after the other. The whole land is suffused in a golden, glittering light by the sun which shines on us as we make our way back with the yak caravan.

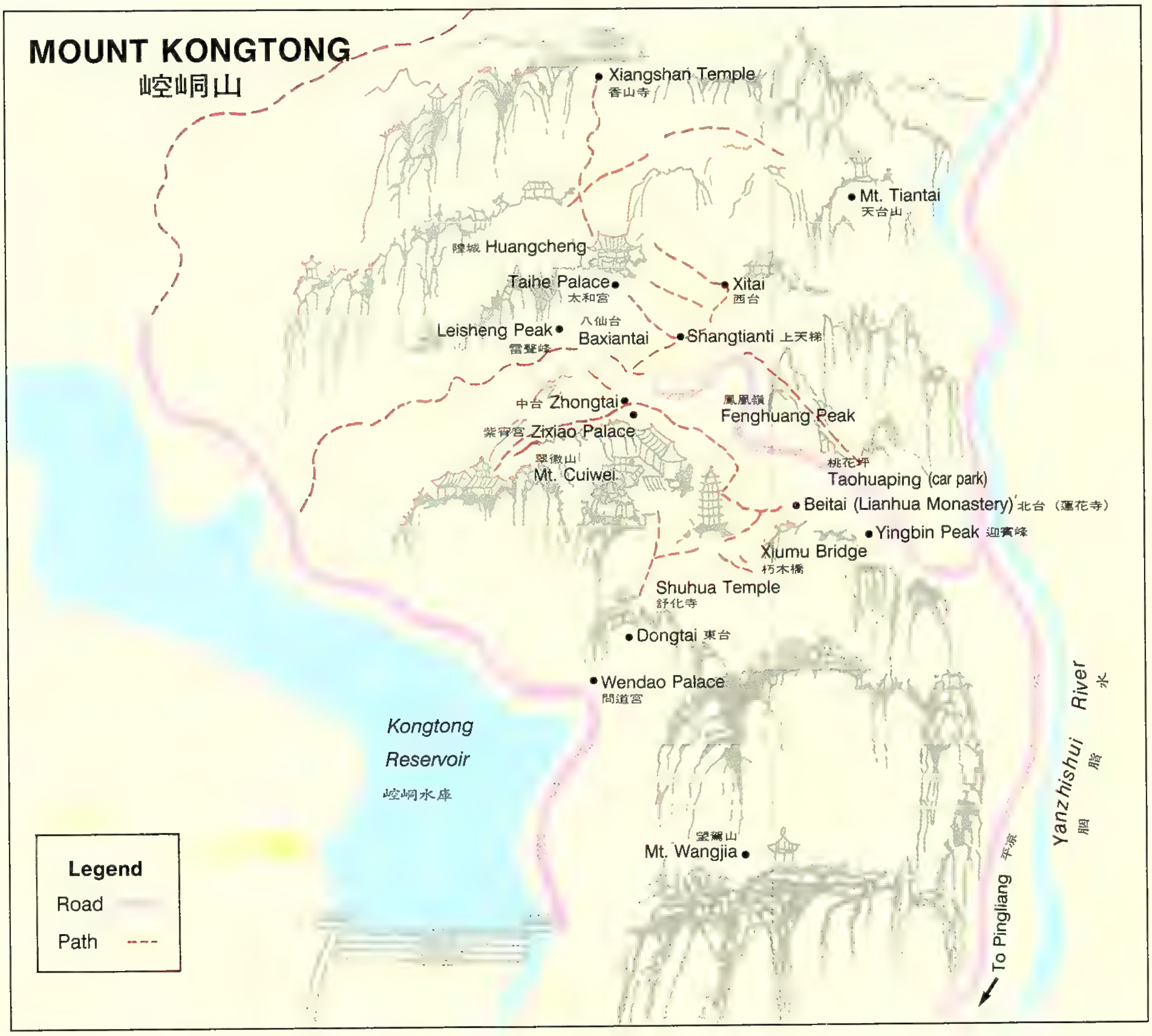
Bruno Baumann

Notes on Mount Kongtong

Pingliang in eastern Gansu makes the best base for a trip to Mount Kongtong. The Pingliang Guesthouse can provide hired cars and bicycles, and can also purchase bus tickets for you at the times when special bus services are laid on.

It takes about thirty minutes to reach the mountain by car from Pingliang. Once there, you can set off into the heart of the mountain on foot by one of two possible routes, along the Kongtong Reservoir and up the 'front' of the mountain, or from Taohuaping up the 'back'. The latter, which is the one taken in our Special Features article, is recommemded as the path is shorter and in better condition. Another option is to drive right up to the Kongtong Management Centre, which provides the only lodgings on the mountain. The guesthouse at the management centre is a bit primitive, but clean. A bed costs around Rmb 5 yuan per day. There is no restaurant, but there is a small shop nearby which sells food. Buses run direct between Pingliang and the Kongtong Management Centre during the peak tourist season and at festivals, especially the time of the Temple Fair around May.

The mountain can roughly be divided into two. The 'front' has steeper peaks and contains sights such as Shangtianti (Ladder to the Sky) Leisheng Peak, Tiantai Peak, Xitai (West Terrace), Xiangshan Temple, Taihe Palace, etc., most of which are Taoist by nature. The gentler 'back' of the mountain, on the other hand, is where you will find the few Buddhist relics. Sights here include Cuiwei Peak, Shuhua Temple, Wangjia Peak, and the Lianhua Monastery on Beitai (North Terrace). The best place on the mountain from which to watch the sunrise is the terrace outside the Baxian Qingshou Hall, two kilometres from the management centre's guesthouse.



Gansu: Past Coverage in CHINA TOURISM

No.57	Dunhuang's Mogao Grottoes (Part 1)
No.58	Mogao Grottoes (Part 2)
No.59	Mogao Grottoes (Part 3)
No.60	Mogao Grottoes (Part 4)
No.68	Southern Gansu Special (Hui lifestyle in Linxia, Labrang Lamasery Labrang Guesthouse)
No.78	Silk Road First Section Special (Tianshui, whirling drums of Tange, cave-temples at Maijishan, Yunzhan Daxiang Hill, etc.)
No.83	Clay Buddhas of Maijishan
No.92	Gansu Corridor Special (Jiayuguan, brick paintings from Wei and Jin tombs, grottoes on Mount Mati, ancient artefacts, Kazaks of Aksay, Yugur of Qilian Mountains, waterwheels along the Huanghe)
No.101	Qilian Mountains
No.104	Spring Festival in Lanzhou
No.108	Zhangye's Big Buddha
No.109	Bronze funerary cavalry escort from Wuwei
No.110	Bingling Grottoes

Bus Services from Wudu

Route	Frequency	Distance (km)	Fare (¥)	Departure
Wudu-Lanzhou	1 per day	450	16.8	07:10 (arrive two days later)
Wudu-Tianshui	4 per day	286	10.3	05:30/05:30/06:20/06:40
Wudu-Baoji	Every other day	400	14.1	08:00 (arrive two days later)
Wudu-Zhaohua	Every other day	336	13.0	07:00 (arrive two days later)
Wudu-Longxi	2 per day	310	11.1	06:20/06:40
Wudu-Têwo	1 per day	233	8.3	06:00 (en route to Labrang Monastery)
Wudu-Wenxian	2 per day	146	6.5	07:00/08:00 (en route to Jiuzhaigou in Sichuan)
Wudu-Lüeyang	4 per day	181	6.7	05:30/05:30/06:40/07:00

Average Climatic Conditions in Southern Gansu's Mountainous Areas

		Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Wudu	Temperature (°C)	2.8	5.7	10.9	16.0	19.6	22.7	24.8	24.2	19.4	14.9	9.3	4.2
	Rainfall (mm)	2.0	3.3	14.7	37.5	57.0	61.2	93.0	81.4	75.3	38.9	9.4	0.9
Wenxian	Temperature (°C)	3.6	6.1	11.1	16.3	19.8	22.8	24.8	24.3	19.7	15.3	9.9	5.2
	Rainfall (mm)	2.1	2.1	12.4	33.5	54.2	64.7	90.4	73.9	64.1	35.7	8.8	0.6
Minxian	Temperature (°C)	-6.9	-3.6	2.0	7.2	10.8	13.6	16.1	15.7	11.6	6.6	0.4	-5.1
	Rainfall (mm)	2.9	4.6	17.9	44.4	71.2	83.4	110.1	107.0	91.7	46.4	7.0	1.6
Kangxian	Temperature (°C)	-0.7	1.5	6.7	12.0	15.9	19.3	21.6	20.7	16.0	11.4	5.6	1.1
	Rainfall (mm)	9.3	10.7	31.9	57.8	74.8	83.7	153.5	156.1	137.5	60.7	25.8	5.8

Train Schedules
Xi'an – Baoji – Tianshui – Lanzhou

275 F.T.	121 F.T.	69 Exp.	53/52 Exp.	7 Exp.	**Train No. Station**	8 Exp.	54/51 Exp.	70 Exp.	122 F.T.	276 F.T.
	From Beijing	From Beijing	From Shanghai	From Beijing		To Beijing	To Shanghai	To Beijing	To Beijing	
14:40	18:34	07:07	11:46	16:36	**Xi'an**	00:12	23:28	05:01	09:28	07:01
15:10	19:05	—	—	—	**Xianyang**	—	—	—	08:27	06:21
18:05	21:40	09:44	14:37	19:18	**Baoji**	21:38	20:59	02:33	06:09	03:34
22:36	01:22	12:46	17:40	—	**Tianshui**	—	17:55	23:26	02:40	22:46
00:37	03:19	—	—	—	**Wushan**	—	—	—	00:03	20:05
01:38	04:13	15:24	20:35	—	**Longxi**	—	14:47	20:43	23:15	19:00
03:56	05:55	—	—	—	**Dingxi**	—	—	—	21:21	16:52
06:43	08:22	19:12	00:16	—	**Lanzhou**	—	11:11	17:00	19:00	14:11
To Xining		To Urümqi	To Urümqi	To Chengdu		From Chengdu	From Urümqi	From Urümqi		From Xining

N.B. Those wanting to visit eastern and southern Gansu should take a train to Baoji or Tianshui, and then take a bus.

Exp. – Express F.T. – Fast through passenger train

Guesthouses and Hotels in Longnan

	Name	Class A		Class B	
		Tariff RMB (¥)	Facilities	Tariff RMB (¥)	Facilities
Wudu	District Guesthouse	38	Suite with toilet, colour TV, electric fan and heating	28	Double room with toilet, colour TV, electric fan and heating
Chengxian	Chengxian Guesthouse	36	Double room with toilet, colour TV, electric fan and heating	28	Triple room with toilet, colour TV, electric fan and heating
Dangchang	Dangchang Guesthouse	40	Double room with toilet, colour TV, electric fan	30	Triple room with toilet, black-and-white TV, electric fan
Lixian	Lixian Guesthouse	38	Double room with toilet, colour TV	20	Double room with toilet, black-and-white TV
Wenxian	Wenxian Guesthouse	36	Double room with toilet, colour TV	24	Double room with toilet, black-and-white TV
	Wenxian Mingping Hotel	40	Double room with toilet, colour TV, electric fan	30	Double room with electric fan, black-and-white TV

Longnan or Southern Gansu

The district of Longnan covers nine counties. It has an area of 28,000 square kilometres and a population of 2,230,000. To the south lies northern Sichuan, to the east southwestern Shaanxi, to the north Tianshui and to the west the extensive grasslands of the Gannan Plateau.

Though the district is mountainous, it is irrigated by the rivers Bailong and Baishui and rice can be grown on the lower-lying flat areas. Much of it has a warm, temperate climate. While above 3,500 metres the weather can be frigid, the mountains of northern Longnan effectively act as a shield against very cold ir streams from the north. Meanwhile, the southernmost counties such as Wenxian and Wudu enjoy an almost subtropical climate.

The average annual temperature is around 5–10°C; there is a fairly cold winter and a cool summer. The average temperatures in January are between −3 and 8° C, in July 14-20°C. Longnan receives plenty of rain in spring, summer and autumn, with an annual rainfall of 500–800 millimetres. The high humidity coupled with the low wind speed mean that Longnan offers a favourable environment for a wide variety of plants, including medicinal herbs.

It takes about a day to travel from Lanzhou, the provincial capital of Gansu, to Wudu in Longnan. If the road via the Gannan Plateau is taken, places of interest en route include Linxia for glimpses of the Hui people's Moslem lifestyle, the Labrang Lamasery at Xiahe, Minxian for views of the snow-capped Minshan Range, as well as the Lazikou Pass, thirty metres long and eight metres wide, the site of a battle between the Communist forces and a local warlord in 1935.

Southern Longnan and the Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture are home to large numbers of Tibetans. While the Gannan Tibetans live in yurts on the grasslands, the Tibetans of Longnan are settled in the mountains. In general, the Tibetans in these areas differ slightly in lifestyle, costume and language from other branches of Tibetans. However, as we see in our Special Features section this issue, the Baima of Wenxian County differ so greatly — even in religious practice — that they dispute that they are Tibetan.

The area between Chengxian and Lixian further north is littered with reminders of history; many battles have taken place in this strategically important region over the ages. East of Lixian is the ancient fort of Qishanbu, connected with Zhuge Liang (181–234), the statesman and military leader of Shu during the Three Kingdoms Period, and his campaigns against the Kingdom of Wu. The fort has been rebuilt extensively in recent years and the temple inside it has been turned into a museum. Exhibits include a large number of weapons, mainly found in the immediate vicinity. Lixian is only about one hundred kilometres by road southwest of Tianshui, one of Gansu's major cities, and is therefore quite easy to reach. However, visitors should note that Lixian is not yet officially open to foreigners, so a special permit is required.

Autumn is generally considered to be the best season for travel in Longnan. But even then there can be continuous drizzle. Mudslides and landslips are particularly frequent in the far south of the region near the Sichuan border — in the vicinity of Wenxian and Zhugqu — where the earth is loose.

Lodging is not a grave problem as there are usually one or two decent guesthouses in most of the county towns. Wudu, the main administrative centre of the district, offers somewhat better lodging and interesting streetside food stalls, although the food available tends to be noodles with beef or mutton. Vegetables and fruit are in short supply, so for longer periods of travel in the region it might be advisable to take vitamin supplements along!

Home of Rare Animals

Longnan's climate — cool in summer but still relatively mild in winter, with the temperatures dropping slowly — has proved to be ideal for some rare animals.

China has about nine giant panda reserves (including those where the giant panda is the major protected species). Northwestern Longnan is the location of the Wenxian Giant Panda Nature Reserve. Covering approximately 180,000 hectares, it is home to over one hundred giant pandas. Pandas dislike severe cold as much as heat so, when winter comes and their water sources freeze, they move down the mountains to around 1,700–2,500 metres above sea-level. In February and March, with the coming of spring, they start back up, settling at an altitude of around 3,000 metres in July. A solitary animal except during the mating season from March to May, the giant panda does not hibernate and goes out looking for food, mainly bamboo shoots, but also other plants and small animals, even in the coldest days of winter.

The golden monkey is probably the next rarest animal in China. In Gansu Province it is found only in the mountains of Longnan's counties of Wenxian, Kangxian and Wudu. In these areas, the male may grow to a size of 1.30 metres standing upright, with a tail eighty centimetres long. The largest group identified to date is made up of over three hundred golden monkeys. Favouring a cool climate, they live in forests at a lower altitude in the autumn, winter and spring and move up to the higher forests only in the summertime to escape the heat.

A third mammal, the takin, half-goat, half-antelope, lives at between 2,500 and 4,000 metres for most of the year. In the summer it too moves up to the grassy summits where there are fresh green shoots but no irritating biting insects. In the depths of winter, when the mountains are covered with snow, the takin retreats to the shelter of the lower-lying forests.

NEWS

Renovations on Mount Emei

The complex of buildings at Huazang Monastery on Mount Emei, the famous Buddhist sacred mountain not far from Leshan in Sichuan Province, was burnt down seventeen years ago. After four years of rebuilding and renovation work it has now been reopened. The Huazang Monastery is located on one of the principal peaks, Jinding, at 3,077 metres above sea-level, and is to be officially inaugurated on the anniversary of Sakyamuni's birth on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month (May 2, 1990).

And Still They Come....

Last year the provincial government of Shanxi undertook the renovation of the Temple of Wu Zetian (reign dates 690–705), the sole empress of the Tang dynasty. This temple, now a museum, is located in the village of Nanxu five kilometres north of Wenshui. A white marble statue of Wu Zetian has been erected. The complex contains a bell tower and a drum tower as well as the principal hall and side chambers.

The Shaoxing National Museum in Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province, recently opened to the public. Part of the Lu Xun Memorial Hall complex, it has an area of more than 1,000 square metres. It is divided into two parts covering, amongst other themes, Chinese legends, traditional arts, Shaoxing's 2,400 years of history, sundry marriage customs, festivals, etc.

The ancient city of Xuzhou in northern Jiangsu, an archaeological goldmine, also has another museum. Situated in a scenic spot near Lake Yunlong, the museum in Tang and Song architectural style houses 260 stone carvings, 177 of which are displayed. Dating from the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220), the carvings show a wide range of topics, including legends, birds and animals, as well as scenes from everyday life. More than four hundred stone slabs with Hand-ynasty engravings have so far been unearthed in the city.

Introducing the Shanghai Centre

Located at the corner of Nanjing Road and Xikang Road right opposite the Shanghai Exhibition Centre, the Shanghai Centre comprises three towers. Two are devoted to residential housing, the third to a world-class 700-room hotel — The Portman Shanghai — managed by The Peninsula Group and The Portman Hotel Company. The hotel features a banqueting hall, meeting rooms, several restaurants and a health club. The three towers are set on a podium combining offices, shops, a modern 1,000-seater theatre, a major exhibition hall and car parking. The multi-use centre, designed to function like a city within a city, is due to open in March 1990.

Chinese Underwater 'Disneyland'

Beijing's Jiulong (Nine Dragons) Amusement Park — the first 'Disneyland'-style underwater park in China — is to be inaugurated soon. Constructed as a Sino-Japanese joint venture, it is located at the Ming Tombs Reservoir north of the capital.

The main building, Jiulong Palace, is actually surrounded by water. Below it, twelve metres underwater, is the 'Dragon Palace' presenting the Dragon King, his palace and the battle for power between his nine dragon sons as depicted in Chinese legend. You can take a ride through a 150-metre-long tunnel to 'experience' the magnificent scenes of the underwater palace through a variety of audiovisual and lighting techniques.

There is also a restaurant, the Jiulong, serving both Western and Oriental specialities, which has already started operations. In addition, motor boats, sailing dinghies, surfboards, etc., will be soon available for hire.

Largest Liao Temple

The largest extant temple from the Liao dynasty (907–1125) of northern China has recently been renovated and opened to the public. Fengguo Temple in the western part of Yixian County, Liaoning Province, dates from the year 1020. The main hall, twenty-one metres high and 1,800 square metres in area, has remained intact since the Liao period.

Hunan Hunting

The Mount Wugai Hunting Ground — the largest in the south of China — is now open to the public. Located thirty kilometres east of Chenzhou in southern Hunan, the 8,000-hectare site lies in the subtropical zone. Even at an altitude of 1,619 metres above sea-level, the average annual temperature is 18.7°C. Local game species include deer, wild boar and wild sheep, hare, masked civet, racoon and pheasant.

Xinjiang's Transport Infrastructure Expands

With the opening of two highways crossing the Taklimakan and Gurbantünggüt deserts, Xinjiang — which accounts for one-sixth of China's total land area — now has a road network in place facilitating communications with other inland provinces.

In the railway sector too, progress has been made in the northwestern part of Xinjiang. The projected railway to link up with the Soviet Union's railway system has reached Jinghe, seventy-three kilometres from the Alataw Pass on the Sino-Soviet border. The final section of track is to be completed next year. When finished, this will represent a second Europe-Asia land bridge, leading all the way to Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

Shang Sacrificial Pits

Four three-metre-deep pits bearing the remains of human and animal sacrifices have been discovered near Zhengzhou in northern Henan. The important find, made by a team from the Institute of Archaeology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, dates back to the Shang dynasty of the sixteenth to eleventh centuries B.C.

Slaves were buried alive in two of the pits, and horses with carts in the other two. One pit contained the remains of two horses lying back to back with a young boy in between them, with two adults arranged on either side of the horses. Another pit held one human corpse and two sheep, the sheep with bronze ornaments around their necks.

The find has yielded clues in the continuing search for the tomb of an aristocrat which is thought to be very close by. Zhengzhou has already been shown to be the site of an immense Shang city.

EXT
SSUE

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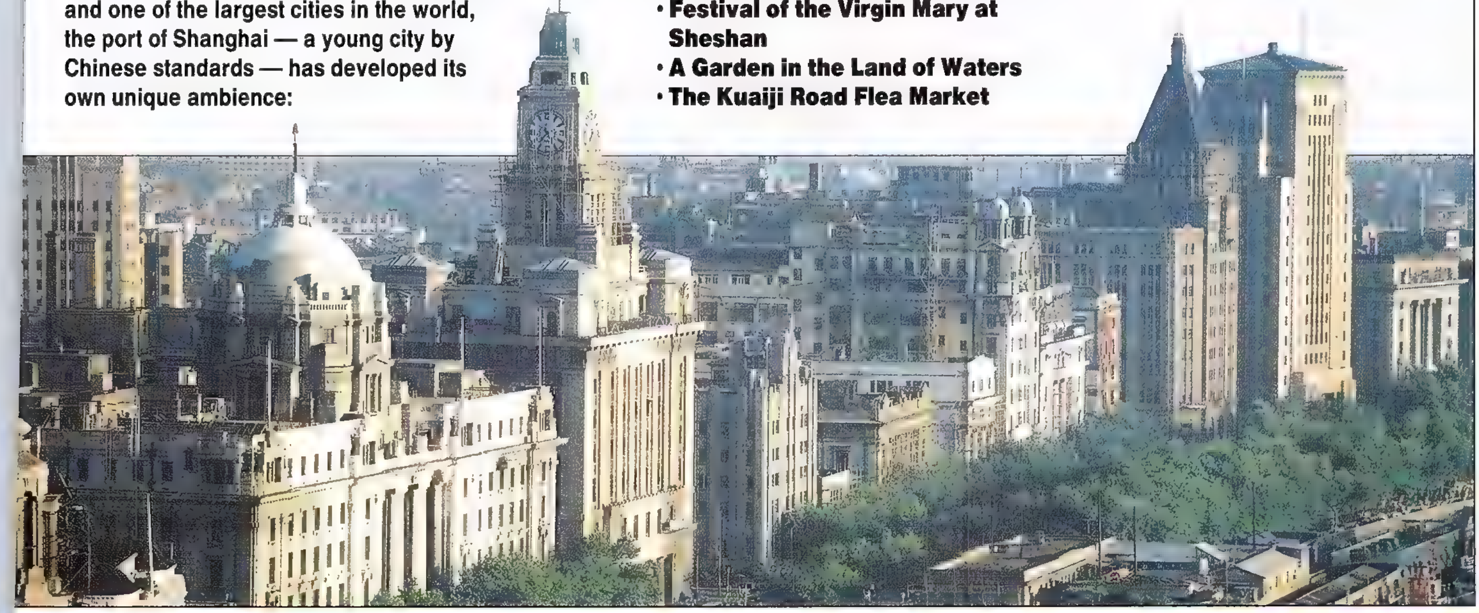

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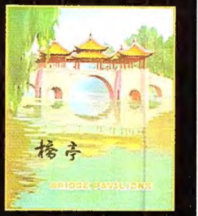

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